

## Mindfulness and Meditation at University: 10 Years of the Munich Model

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Andreas de Bruin

# MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION AT UNIVERSITY

10 Years of the Munich Model



Andreas de Bruin

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10 Years of the Munich Model

**[transcript]**

**Mindfulness – Education – Media** | Volume 5

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Dedicated  
to all the spiritual teachers,  
who for millenia  
have brought their wisdom to the world.



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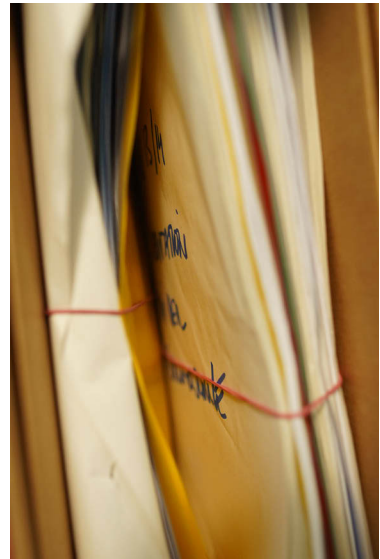
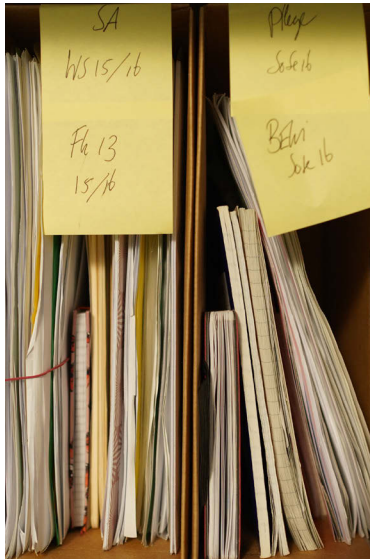
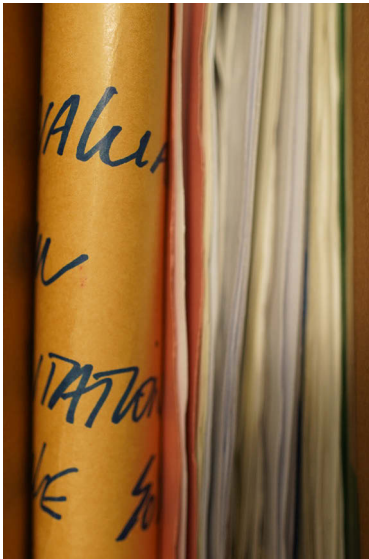
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# PREFACE

This book looks back at the first ten years of the “Mindfulness and Meditation in a University Context”, from March 2010 to March 2020. It outlines the motives for establishing such a program at universities, as well as its structure and implementation.

Since the Munich Model’s launch in 2010, with a meditation course for fifteen students from the Social Work degree course at Munich’s University of Applied Sciences, the program has been continuously expanded. Since then, more than 150 students from 21 courses of study have taken part in the program each semester.

While the Munich Model now includes both theory and practice for students, as well as additional offerings for teachers and university employees, this book will focus primarily on the voices of students who have participated in these courses. Through their meditation journals, they share the experiences they have during mindfulness and meditation practice and also how these practices have influenced their studies and their daily lives.

The original intent was to archive these meditation journals, kept as a record of participation. As the idea for this book project developed, the idea arose that some selected entries should be published, as these indicate the impact mindfulness and meditation approaches have on students in the context of their lives as students at university.

Of the 2000 students who have taken part in the courses so far, some one hundred were contacted and asked whether they would agree to the publication of their journal entries. Naturally these excerpts were kept anonymous. The students who wrote back all agreed to have their entries published as they considered the project to be “important”, “super”, and “ingenious”. This has brought the book very much to life. The book also serves as a kind of “workbook” that can be applied for personal use, yet also aims to be a stimulus and an example for how the topic “Mindfulness and Meditation” can be successfully implemented at universities and other educational institutions.

“All beginnings are difficult”, as a German proverb goes – which means that new situations or challenges are often tricky at the outset. This may be true, but one could also say: all beginnings are exciting, inspiring, and exhilarating. Perhaps one should therefore stick to Confucius, who is reported to have said: “Even the longest journey begins with the first step.” So as soon as one takes this first step or the first few steps, much often unfolds “as if by itself”: one meets the right people at the right time, who contribute their skills. The required premises are found, materials and, thanks to convincing arguments, funds are released. The Munich Model has developed in precisely this way over the years.

Since its inception, 75 students have chosen “Mindfulness and Meditation” as the theme of their final theses – each focusing on a different topic related to their respective course of study, such as social work, school pedagogy, nursing or early childhood education. This speaks to the students’ great interest. Moreover, many of these former students now carry out mindfulness and meditation projects through activities in their professional fields. Some of them have even become lecturers themselves and have recently begun teaching courses within the framework of the Munich Model.

There are today numerous national and international approaches to anchoring mindfulness and meditation in the educational system. The Munich Model serves as an example for how comprehensive implementation of such a program can succeed at universities.



# INTRODUCTION



# Mindfulness and Meditation in the Educational System – a Paradigm Shift? <sup>1</sup>

For thousands of years the practices of mindfulness and meditation have proven to be invaluable tools for exploring one's own mind. Since the 1970s, the neurosciences in particular have researched these topics, discovering that mindfulness and meditation have the potential to not only relax mind and body but also to change entirely the functioning of the brain. More recently, there is growing interest in mindfulness and meditation in society. As a result, mindfulness and meditation have found their way into adult education centres, yoga centres, therapy centres, clinics, prisons and companies. Courses are now offered in schools and universities<sup>2</sup>, while even in day-care centers simple mindfulness exercises are practiced.

In this context, the purpose of the present section is to encourage a closer look at the concept of self-awareness, with a view to it being seen as an important scientific field of study.

## Science on the move

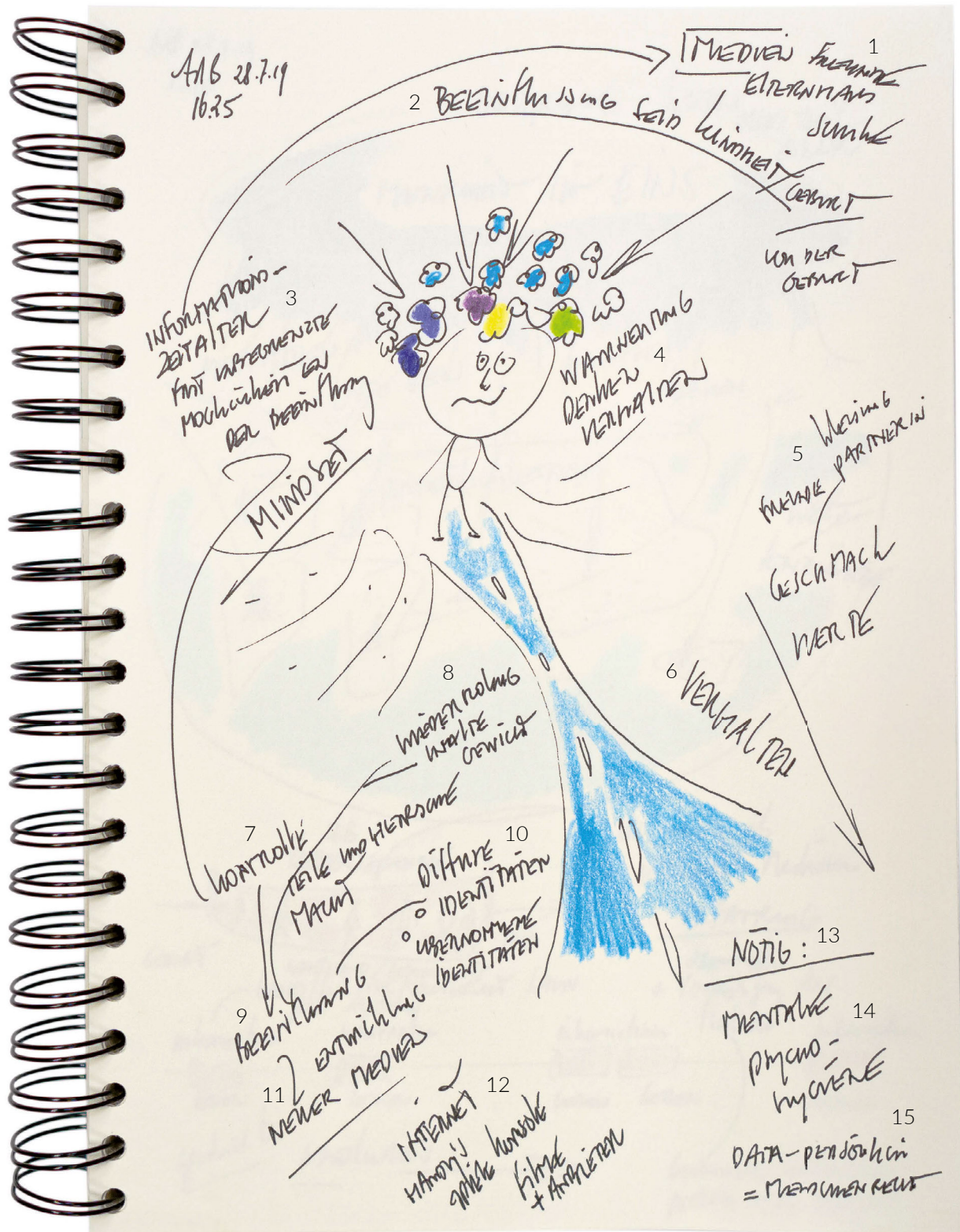
By its very definition, SCIENCE is a multifaceted subject. Above all, science strives for the achievement of knowledge, and to this end, recognized and comprehensible procedures, methods and approaches are employed, data is collected and theories developed. The field of science is composed of many sub-disciplines and individual sciences which research their own subject areas. The imparting of knowledge as well as its systematic storage and archival are also among science's tasks. The term is also represented by the many people working in the scientific community, as well as for the varied institutions and settings in which science takes place. For a better understanding of life, science can serve as a helpful compass, and in harmony with ethics and morals it can lead to social well-being.<sup>3</sup>

A look at the history of science showcases the manifold achievements accomplished by mankind over the millennia. From the historical perspective, science also proves not to be static, but something always evolving. For example, if it was once assumed that the earth is flat, at some point it was scientifically proven that the earth is in fact round, and that the earth rotates around the sun, and not the other way around.

In this context, the philosopher Thomas S. Kuhn (1922-1996) coined the term PARADIGM. For Kuhn, a paradigm represents a collection of fixed rules and criteria for how the world and science can be interpreted. According to Kuhn, a fundamental change of perspective within science, a so-called scientific CHANGE OF PARADIGM, can only take place when an alternative paradigm asserts itself with sufficient strength, in turn replacing the paradigm that up to this point had predominated. From Kuhn's point of view, this supersedure is not a modest transformation reflecting compromise but a shift right down to scientific foundations – in other words, a “revolution”.<sup>4</sup>

Periods of societal upheaval challenge science. Outdated social structures stagnate and must be revised or be completely replaced. New ones have yet to be tested, creating a certain vacuum and promoting uncertainty. We are witnessing such a time today. In the fields of politics, economics and religion, upholding the “status quo” no longer seems to work. Maintaining our materialistic lifestyles, especially in the industrialized countries, no longer seems appropriate.<sup>5</sup> It turns out that we have overshot the mark: too much individualism and self-interest at the expense of others, overconsumption, living life too fast. And our connection to nature and the environment has also been thrown off balance, and climate change is the undeniable evidence.<sup>6</sup>

Thoughts shape one's path in life.



<sup>1</sup> media, friends, parent's home, school | <sup>2</sup> influences since childhood / birth / before birth | <sup>3</sup> information age, almost unlimited possibilities of influence | <sup>4</sup> perception, thinking, behavior | <sup>5</sup> clothes, partner, friends; taste, values | <sup>6</sup> BEHAVIOUR | <sup>7</sup> control, divide and rule, power | <sup>8</sup> repetition, content, weight | <sup>9</sup> influence | <sup>10</sup> diffuse identities, assumed identities | <sup>11</sup> development of new media | <sup>12</sup> internet, cell phones, game consoles, movies + providers | <sup>13</sup> NECESSARY | <sup>14</sup> mental hygiene | <sup>15</sup> personal data = human right

*Your spiritual Self is calling you every day. You must realize that you are not this body, but the Infinite Spirit within.*

Paramahansa Yogananda (1893–1952)

## Happiness and success – or what is the meaning of life?

Today, happiness and success are currently still closely linked to material prosperity. Money in particular has become immensely important. By means of material goods and the symbolic meaning we attach to them, we strengthen our self-esteem and self-confidence. However, it's also clear that happiness and success achieved in this way is not permanent. The pursuit of money and power arouses destructive emotions such as envy, hate and greed, and these ultimately lead to dissatisfaction, conflict and, in extreme cases, war. It has long been evident that our happiness does not lie in the outer, material world, and that our destiny as human beings cannot be the pursuit of wealth and possessions.<sup>7</sup> But then what is the meaning of life? What is important in life?

## Freedom of mind

In his book *Think on These Things*, the Indian spiritual teacher Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986) aims exactly at this question when, at the beginning, he asks the reader if they have ever wondered what education means: “Is it merely in order to pass some examinations and get a job? Or is it the function of education to prepare us while we are young to understand the whole process of life? Having a job and earning one's livelihood is necessary – but is that all?”<sup>8</sup>

For Krishnamurti an essential prerequisite for the understanding of life is “freedom of mind” and thus the absence of fear.<sup>9</sup> “But how can we be free to look and learn when our minds from the moment we are born to the moment we die are shaped by a particular culture in the narrow pattern of the ‘me’?”<sup>10</sup> According to Krishnamurti, only a mind free of conditioning is able to observe

and change thought and action: “In order to observe the movement of your own mind and heart, of your whole being, you must have a free mind [...]”<sup>11</sup>

## Research on the mind

His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate sees research on the mind as a task for science: “At the academic level, we need further research on the internal processes and relationships of the mind.”<sup>12</sup> Of particular note here are the “Mind and Life Dialogues” initiated in the mid-1980s by the neuroscientist and philosopher Francisco Varela (1946–2001), the American social entrepreneur R. Adam Engle in concert with the Dalai Lama. Together with other western scientists and Buddhist monks, the aim was to stimulate an exchange between modern science and Buddhism in order to discover the potential points of interface.<sup>13</sup> Through this collaboration, mindfulness and meditation practices have gained increasing attention in the (neuro) sciences.<sup>14</sup>

For the American neuroscientist and mindfulness researcher Richard Davidson, who is one of the pioneers of mindfulness and meditation research<sup>15</sup> and is also involved in the “Mind and Life Dialogues”, four components are important for a healthy mind: first, the basic recognition of *awareness*; second, *connection* – for example to be able to experience emotions such as compassion, kindness, gratitude and thus to relate to one's environment; third, having *insight into one's own self*; and finally, to recognize one's own *destiny in life* and to be able to orient one's own behavior towards it.<sup>16</sup> At his Center for Healthy Minds<sup>17</sup> in Wisconsin, around 100 people conduct research through numerous scientific projects to discover more about what constitutes a healthy mind and especially what is necessary to cultivate well-being. Among other subjects, the focus is on mindfulness and meditation approaches.

The molecular biologist and Buddhist monk Matthieu Ricard, whose brain has for long been one of the most studied in mindfulness and meditation research<sup>18</sup>, sees meditation as an essential tool for gaining insight into one's own mind: “Meditation is not just a luxury, but the best way to find out how our mind works. In essence, meditation is the work on our own mind. It is about transforming the mind, because it is the mind that experiences the world. He can be our best friend, but also our greatest enemy. That is why we must cultivate him. And this has an effect not only on



our inner experience, but also on our relationships and our environment.”<sup>19</sup> Above all, meditation and a “compassionate awareness”<sup>20</sup> can promote important qualities such as compassion and altruism, which are essential for a happy and peaceful coexistence.<sup>21</sup>

## Mindfulness as an attitude

A more general interpretation of MINDFULNESS, in wide use today, involves the conscious perception of one’s current state of affairs – merely observing, not evaluating. “Mindfulness is basically just a particular way of paying attention and the awareness that arises through paying attention in that way.”<sup>22</sup> Many everyday activities are well-suited for this: for example eating, walking, talking to someone, cleaning, ironing, washing dishes, listening to nature and much more.<sup>23</sup> When washing the dishes, for example, most people’s thoughts are elsewhere. Mindful dishwashing means that I see what I am washing. That I can feel if the water is warm, if it is cold; how does the plate or glass feel. When we learn to do these things more consciously again, we train our “muscles of awareness” so that we are more in the now in everything we do. The important thing is not to do this in a too intellectual and mechanical way – for example, along the lines of: I must now eat mindfully; I must now breathe mindfully. The desire to be mindful should come from within. Mindfulness is an attitude.

## Mindfulness and insight meditation

The mindful observation of physical states, thoughts and emotions is the main focus of the MINDFULNESS and INSIGHT MEDITATION. The aim is to observe the flow of thoughts and emotions and thus gain more insight into their mechanisms. To achieve this, one can practice more structured exercises, such as sitting in silence for 15 to 20 minutes a day and observing the breath in a relaxed manner, or the “body scan” – a relaxation method in which one can use one’s attention gradually “wanders” through one’s body feeling into its different parts. Also sutras (instructions) like: “Breathing in, I calm my mental formations. Breathing out, I calm my mental formations”<sup>24</sup> aim to relax the mind.

## Metta Meditation

Among meditation techniques, METTA MEDITATIONS or MEDITATIONS OF LOVING KINDNESS form a category of their own. They focus in particular on the promotion of COMPASSION and CONNECTION. Normally, this takes the form of an inner recitation or the speaking out loud of loving phrases for oneself or others, such as, “May I be safe and secure. May I be happy. May I be healthy.” And in relation to others: “May this person be safe and secure. May this person be happy. May this person be healthy.” You can imagine a person that you like, or a person with whom you hardly have a relationship, or even people that you dislike or those whom you don’t hold in high regard. Another variant is to imagine a loving, benevolent feeling and to extend this warmth of heart more and more, and also to include not only people but, for example, nature as well. The radius can encompass a local environment, or extend to the entire planet or even further beyond.<sup>25</sup>

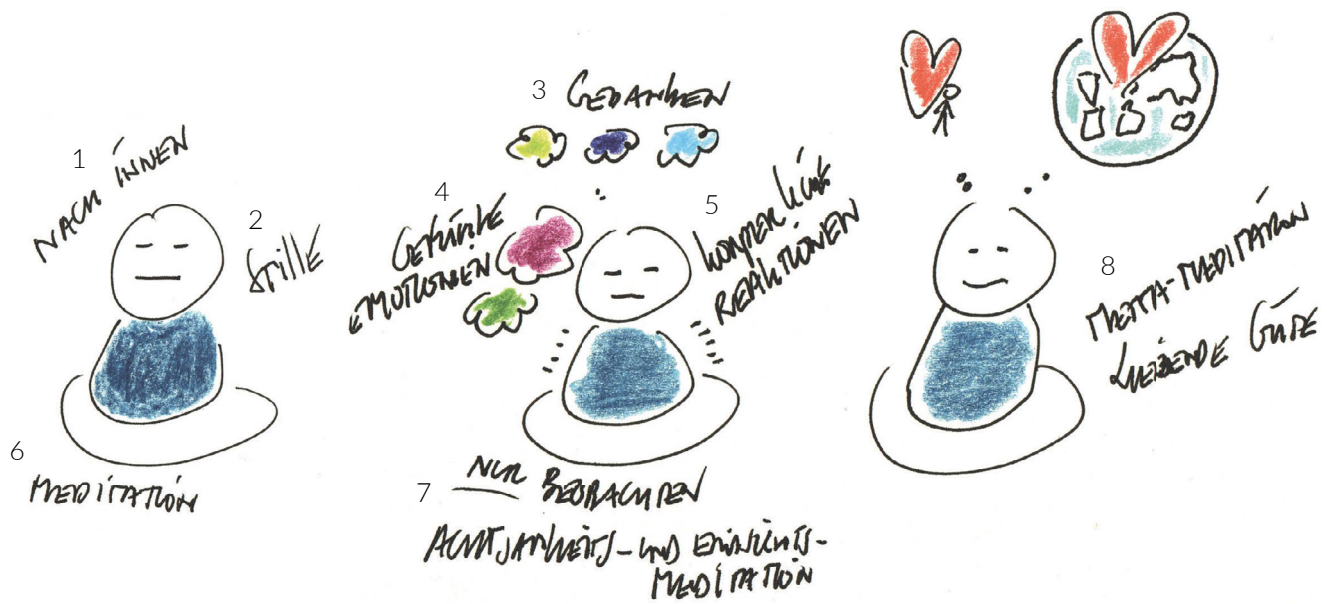
## Problems of mindfulness training

A problem with the rapid spread of mindfulness techniques is that they are now also being put to use with the primary goal of producing profit and maximizing performance. One such example is mindfulness trainings in companies, offered with the aim of making employees more resistant to stress, without changing the structures that cause stress. Another difficulty is that mindfulness can also increase complacency, so that people focus primarily on their own concerns.<sup>26</sup>

And last but not least is the question of morals. For example, should snipers be trained in mindfulness techniques in order to increase their capacity to kill with greater concentration and precision? In this context, Richard Davidson stresses that the practice of mindfulness must always be accompanied by an ethical stance.<sup>27</sup> Jon Kabat-Zinn, the pioneer of the mindfulness movement and founder of the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, also emphasizes this aspect: “Moreover, when we speak of *mindfulness*, it is important to keep in mind that we equally mean *heartfulness*.”<sup>28</sup> Matthieu Ricard speaks of compassionate mindfulness.<sup>29</sup> In his opinion, compassion ensures that mindfulness is lived with sincerity.<sup>30</sup>



Meditation, mindfulness and insight meditation and metta meditation.



<sup>1</sup> going inward | <sup>2</sup> silence | <sup>3</sup> thoughts | <sup>4</sup> feelings, emotions | <sup>5</sup> physical reactions | <sup>6</sup> meditation | <sup>7</sup> only observing; mindfulness and insight meditation | <sup>8</sup> metta meditation, loving kindness

Another complexity facing mindfulness is the question of dualism. In my role as a conscious observer, am I truly able to experience the event itself with awareness? For example, when I eat mindfully and try to be aware of it: I notice how I eat, what I eat, how it looks, how it smells etc. But the connection to myself as a point of reference creates a separation between me and the action of “eating”: a duality. Is it possible to eliminate this duality? This would involve the dissolution of the reference point “I”. Rather than “I eat a salad”, it would instead be “eating a salad”.

## The inner observer

Taking up this point, the Indian spiritual teacher Nisargadatta Maharaj (1897-1981) states: “The observer and his observation, as well as the world observed, appear and disappear together. Beyond it all, there is void. This void is one for all.”<sup>31</sup> The main question is: what is meant by the observer? “Who says that he is alive? Find out, who is the Witness who *knows* that he is alive? This is Awareness of one’s existence, ‘I Am’, prior to thought. Who says, ‘I am alive’, who says, ‘I am not alive’, what is that? ‘I Am’ is not something that can be put into words; it is the knowledge, the Awareness before thought. You have to

just ‘Be’.”<sup>32</sup> An essential point in the teaching of Nisargadatta Maharaj is the division between a *verbal* “I am” and a *non-verbal* “I am”, which can only be experienced without thoughts, memories, emotions, associations and perceptions. In order to reach your true inner being, you have to stick with the non-verbal “I am”.<sup>33</sup> If we succeed in remaining on this level without any attributions, we come into contact with pure consciousness. “Truth is permanent. The real is changeless. What changes is not real, what is real does not change. Now, what is it in you that does not change? As long as there is food, there is body and mind. When the food is stopped, the body dies and the mind dissolves. But does the observer perish?”<sup>34</sup>

*The Self is that where there is  
absolutely no “I” thought.  
That is called Silence.*

Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950)

## Practice of self-research

Already in the 8th century, the Indian philosopher and teacher of Vedanta, Shankaracharya (788-820), emphasized the importance of self-exploration: “Since I am always the One, subtle, the connoisseur, the witness, the always existing and immovable, there can be no doubt that I am THAT (Brahman). This is the way self-exploration should be conducted.”<sup>35</sup>

The well-known Indian spiritual teacher Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950) takes up this aspect and describes how the practice of self-exploration could be pursued – by asking the following simple questions and conscientiously getting to the bottom of the matter. “Who am I? Who sees when I see? Who hears when I hear? Who knows that I am aware? Who am I?”<sup>36</sup> Over time, one discovers that these questions lead to a point that is unchangeable. For example, if you look at yourself regularly in the mirror over the years, you will note that you appear to be getting older. But does the inner observer also change?

The fundamental work *The Three Pillars of Zen* by Philip Kapleau (1912-2004) states: “In order to become a Buddha you must discover who it is that wants to become a Buddha. To know this Subject you must right here and now probe deeply into yourself, inquiring: ‘What is it that thinks in terms of good and bad, that sees, that hears?’”<sup>37</sup>

Such a process of self-inquiry requires the radical abandonment of old conditioning and identification with it. The Buddhist teacher Jack Kornfield points to this in his book *A Path with Heart. A Guide Through the Perils and Promises of Spiritual Life*: “Our world and sense of self is a play of patterns. Any identity we can grasp is transient, tentative. This is difficult to understand from words such as *selflessness* or *emptiness of self*. In fact, my own teacher Achaan Chah said, ‘If you try to understand it intellectually, your head will probably explode.’ However, the experience of selflessness in practice can bring us to great freedom.”<sup>38</sup>

In short, it is about freeing oneself from the mind and *being with the whole being*. And this can be practiced in every moment. “For anyone to be, it is only necessary to be. No path to one’s own Being could be thought to exist, no path of realization of the impersonal God, the omnipresent Being, could be shown, because the very conception of ‘path’ takes one’s self out of one’s own Being. The very idea of a path introduces the conception of something far away, whereas the Being is the essential *oneself*.

[...] It is just a question of Being [...].”<sup>39</sup> This form of being is a deep form of mindful living.

Of course, this does not mean that in the context of mindful living thinking no longer has any function. Thinking is an extremely important tool for mastering everyday life. Drawing on the memory to store thinking, the knowledge one needs for a respective course of action can be usefully retrieved when needed. But on the psychological level, countless thoughts dealing with past and future, with fears and desires constantly keep us from experiencing the present moment.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, our thinking is not a fixed, stable state but is constantly changing.

English born lecturer and psychotherapist Phyllis Krystal (1914-2016) writes in her book *Taming our Monkey Mind. Insight, Detachment, Identity*: “So thought is obviously not always a reliable indicator of what is correct or incorrect. It merely presents us with a view of our personal preferences and aversions according to the way our senses have lured our monkey mind into becoming attached to certain objects, ideas, opinions, beliefs, superstitions, and the vast mass of human thought.”<sup>41</sup>

If we want to direct our attention inwards, we need silence: “[...] when the mind is very quiet, completely still, when there is not a movement of thought and therefore no experiencer, no observer, then that very stillness has its own creative understanding. In that stillness the mind is transformed into something else.”<sup>42</sup> In this case we are talking about an understanding of mindfulness that goes far beyond a more general understanding of mindfulness. Mindfulness in all its depth is a meditative state, is MEDITATION. “Mindfulness can help us to communicate again, especially with ourselves.”<sup>43</sup> Or in the words of Jon Kabat-Zinn, “Most of all, it has to do with being in touch.”<sup>44</sup>

## Meditation and Self

“This source of wisdom is the Self”, says Indian spiritual teacher and peace activist Vishnu Devananda (1927-1993). “The Self is not the individual body or mind, but rather that aspect deep inside each person that knows the Truth.”<sup>45</sup>

And in order to reach this truth, this deep inner state of being and nature, it requires meditative contemplation. Because: “Without the help of meditation, you cannot attain Knowledge of the Self. Without its aid, you

cannot grow into the divine state.”<sup>46</sup> And vice versa, if the SELF-AWARENESS is maintained continuously, this is called “true meditation.”<sup>47</sup>

## Outlook

To revisit Krishnamurti’s question about the importance of education, the following questions arise: “How can we learn to understand our own lives? How can everyone find out who they really are instead of imitating others<sup>48</sup> and how can we grow without fear in ‘complete freedom to grow and create a different society, a new world?’<sup>49</sup>” In order to achieve this, it is important that we also learn through our education systems to promote and cultivate SELF-AWARENESS.<sup>50</sup> And for this the mind should be unbound and free. Mindfulness and meditation programs can make an important contribution here. “Meditation is about exploring the mind and strengthening the positive qualities. But what is meditation good for? It serves the inner development, so that we can act more from the basis of a healthy state of mind.”<sup>51</sup>

In comparing the early researches of neuroscientific mindfulness and meditation in the 1970s with today, a great deal has been achieved. As the research instruments and approaches become finer and more precise, there will inevitably be new insights.<sup>52</sup> It remains to be seen to what extent it will be possible to scientifically record the existence and workings of the Self.<sup>53</sup> Ultimately, for this to be achieved would entail a necessary shift from the material level (for example the brain) to the immaterial level (the Self). And in such a case we would certainly be faced with a paradigm shift.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. de Vries 1985.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Kuhn 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Dalai Lama 1999.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Dalai Lama 1999.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Dalai Lama 1999, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Krishnamurti 1989, p. 1. For a summary of Krishnamurti's career and some of his most important statements, see the documentary film *Jiddu Krishnamurti – The Challenge of Change* by Michael Mendiza.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Krishnamurti 1989, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Krishnamurti 2010, p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> Krishnamurti 2010, p. 18.

<sup>12</sup> Dalai Lama 2015a, p. 213.

<sup>13</sup> For more information, see [www.mindandlife.org](http://www.mindandlife.org). (accessed: September 13, 2020). See also the film *Dalai Lama – Scientist* (2019).

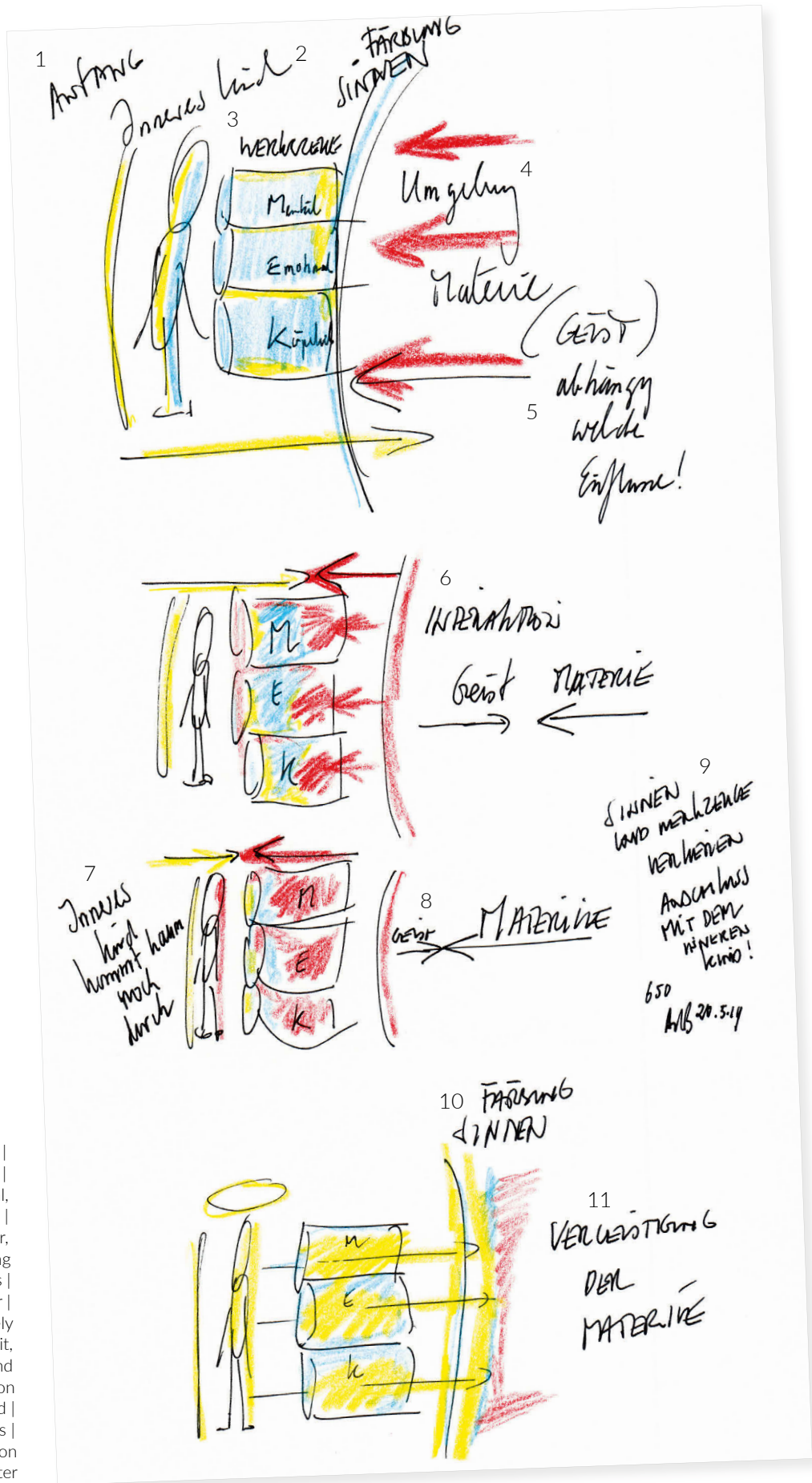
<sup>14</sup> Cf. Goleman 2004; Davidson / Goleman 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Davidson / Goleman 2017; Ott 2015; Sedlmeier 2016; Tang 2019.

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- <sup>18</sup> Cf. Ricard 2018, p. 38.
- <sup>19</sup> Ricard 2018, p. 38 [Author's translation].
- <sup>20</sup> Ricard 2018, p. 42 [Author's translation].
- <sup>21</sup> Cf. Ricard 2015a, p. 53 ff. and 2016.
- <sup>22</sup> Kabat-Zinn 2013, p. lxii.
- <sup>23</sup> Cf. Kabat-Zinn 2013, p. 147 ff.
- <sup>24</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh 2008, p. 13 and 65.
- <sup>25</sup> In the book: *The Art of Forgiveness, Lovingkindness, and Peace* (2008) by Jack Kornfield a series of metta meditation or loving-kindness exercises are described. For more examples of exercises, see also Kornfield 1993.
- <sup>26</sup> Cf. Davidson 2018, p. 61.
- <sup>27</sup> See lecture and panel discussion of March 19, 2019a, Professor Richard Davidson, [www.ehw-stiftung.de](http://www.ehw-stiftung.de) (accessed September 13, 2020).
- <sup>28</sup> Cf. Kabat-Zinn 2013, p. xxxv.
- <sup>29</sup> Cf. Ricard 2018, p. 42 [Author's translation]. See also Ricard 2015b, p. 239 ff. and Ricard 2016.
- <sup>30</sup> Cf. Ricard 2016.
- <sup>31</sup> Wolinsky 2000, p. 8.
- <sup>32</sup> Nisargadatta 2014, p. 15. That the naming of the perceiver is a creation of one's own thinking is also found in Krishnamurti 1989, p. 195.
- <sup>33</sup> Cf. Wolinsky 2000, p. 17. Nisargadatta Maharaj distinguishes in his teachings between the verbal and the non-verbal I am. An exercise on the "non-verbal I am" is shown by the long-time disciple of Nisargadatta Maharaj and founder of quantum psychology, Stephen H. Wolinsky, Ph.D., under "What is the I am?", "Nisargadatta Maharaj / Experiential Meditation", [www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE6kS7vVsXw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE6kS7vVsXw) (accessed September 13, 2020). The exercise is also part of the film *I Am That I Am. Experience the Teachings of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj – Part 1* (2009, 7:33-16:39 min.). For more in-depth information, see the short article by Jack Kornfield about his experience with Nisargadatta: "Jack Kornfield on Nisargadatta Maharaj (2)", [www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXuF8qmv5Nc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXuF8qmv5Nc) (accessed September 13, 2020).
- <sup>34</sup> Nisargadatta 2009, p. 201.
- <sup>35</sup> Shankaracharya 2016, p. 39 [Author's translation].
- <sup>36</sup> Singer 2007, p. 23; see also Maharshi 2011, p. 18 f. as well as Maharshi 2017, p. 115 f. U.S. spiritual teacher and economics professor Michael A. Singer also emphasizes the focus on the Self: "When you contemplate the nature Self, you are meditating. That is why meditation is the highest state. It is the return to the root of your being, the simple awareness of being aware." (Singer 2007, p. 37) See also interview "What do you really want?", [www.youtube.com/watch?v=73-2PggJJW0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73-2PggJJW0) (accessed September 13, 2020).
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- <sup>38</sup> Kornfield 1993, p. 200.
- <sup>39</sup> Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 2019, p. 267 f.
- <sup>40</sup> Cf. Krishnamurti 2010, p. 42 and 103.
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- <sup>46</sup> Swami Sivananda in: Vishnu Devananda 1981, p. 1.
- <sup>47</sup> Cf. Krishnamurti 2010, p. 120 f.
- <sup>48</sup> Cf. Krishnamurti 1989, p. 3.
- <sup>49</sup> Krishnamurti 1989, p. 4.
- <sup>50</sup> See also Maharshi 2017, p. 9.
- <sup>51</sup> Dalai Lama 2015b, p. 344 f.
- <sup>52</sup> Cf. Goleman/Davidson 2017, p. 288 ff.; Morel 2016.
- <sup>53</sup> Cf. Morel 2016, 17:51 min.



Interaction between spirit and matter. The vehicles of the self, the soul, first become filled with matter. Through the spiritualization of matter the vehicles become permeable and clear again.



<sup>1</sup> beginning, inner child |

<sup>2</sup> coloring, senses |

<sup>3</sup> vehicles, mental, emotional, physical |

<sup>4</sup> environment, matter, (spirit) | <sup>5</sup> depending upon which influences |

<sup>6</sup> interaction, spirit, matter |

<sup>7</sup> inner child can barely come through | <sup>8</sup> spirit, matter | <sup>9</sup> senses and vehicles lose connection with the inner child |

<sup>10</sup> coloring senses |

<sup>11</sup> the spiritualization of matter

# Self, Soul and Mind

When studying the topics of mindfulness and meditation, it quickly becomes apparent that the concept of the SELF figures prominently in the specialized literature and is often used in different contexts. But what does “the Self” mean?

In general, a distinction is made between two levels of the SELF:<sup>1</sup>

- The LOWER SELF: The I, the person, our so-called ego, that which separates us from the HIGHER SELF. It concerns identification with our body, with our fluctuating feelings and thoughts, i.e. with what we call our personality.
- The HIGHER SELF: In the teachings on mindfulness and meditation, this term refers to a higher level that goes beyond the I construct of personality. This higher Self concerns the inner core of the human being, also known as the SOUL.

In this section, in addition to the two levels and meanings of the SELF, the term EGO will also be examined, since the limitations of the human mind produced by the EGO obscure the path to the HIGHER SELF.

## Self and Personality – the Lower Self

Especially in the spiritual tradition of India it is postulated that man is essentially the Self (soul) and therefore divine. But this divinity is neither recognized nor lived, because the majority of the human spirit is directed outwards and is bound in the material. Swami Muktananda (1908-1982), one of the great Indian spiritual teachers of our time, says in his book *Where Are You Going? A Guide to the Spiritual Journey*: “There is one great obstacle that keeps us from knowing the Self, and that is the mind. The mind veils the inner Self and hides it from us.”<sup>2</sup>

If we follow a traditional meditation technique, provided that the mind is healthy, the higher Self can be experienced. Swami Muktananda describes this as follows: “That is why the ancient sages, who were true psychologists, concluded that the mind is the source of both bond-

*The essential feature of consciousness of the Self is therefore continuity, permanence. But that of the conscious I is only a pale reflection of the eternal, immortal essence of the spiritual I, the Self.*

Roberto Assagioli (1888-1974)

age and liberation, the source of both sorrow and joy, our worst enemy as well as our greatest friend.”<sup>3</sup>

In psychology, the “science of the soul”<sup>4</sup>, there are many terms used in connection with the word self, such as SELF CONCEPT or SELF IMAGE. In many branches of psychology, these terms refer to concrete ideas that people have about themselves and therefore closely relate to the personality.

To what extent we are satisfied with our self-image depends on the ideal or desired image we have of ourselves. Who do I want to be? What do I want to achieve in life? The decisive point here is that this understanding of the personal self is usually linked to external objects and forms of behavior and has nothing to do with the Higher Self or the soul.

## Higher Self and Soul

There are, however, schools of thought in psychology that have already adopted a transcendent level of the Self and firmly integrated it into their theories.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the Swiss psychiatrist and founder of analytical psychology, Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), spoke of the Self as an inner center: “I have called this center the Self, the center of personality; it could just as well be called the God in us. The beginnings of our entire spiritual life seem to spring inextricably from this point. And all the highest and ultimate goals seem to run toward it.”<sup>6</sup>

Another example is Psychosynthesis, founded by the Italian physician, psychiatrist and psychotherapist Roberto Assagioli (1888-1974).<sup>7</sup> “Psychosynthesis is not only therapy, it is a philosophy of life, a psychology for the individual who wants to grow. It is a method for harmonizing all psychic functions, reintegrating the unconscious and creating a center of harmony so that it becomes the higher Self: the soul that is expressed, witnessed, lived, manifested.”<sup>8</sup>

Instead of a higher Self, Assagioli also spoke of the transpersonal or spiritual Self.<sup>9</sup> This transpersonal Self gives “permanence” and “stability” in contrast to the personal, conscious I, which, according to Assagioli, is only a “weakened and veiled form” of the transpersonal Self.<sup>10</sup>

In his book *Be As You Are. The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi* the well-known Indian spiritual teacher Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950) discusses the “Self” and the “I”: “The real Self is the infinite ‘I’. That ‘I’ is perfection. It is eternal. It has no origin and no end. The other ‘I’ is born and also dies. It is impermanent.”<sup>11</sup> According to Maharshi, attachments to the “other I” cause us to lose the infinite “I” as an alignment point: “After the rise of the ‘I’-thought there is the false identification of the ‘I’ with the body, the senses, the mind, etc. ‘I’ is wrongly associated with them and the true ‘I’ is lost sight of. In order to sift the pure ‘I’ from the contaminated ‘I’, this discarding is mentioned. But it does not mean exactly discarding of the non-Self, it means the finding of the real Self.”<sup>12</sup>

For him, the question “Who am I?” is here the central point. To pursue this question sincerely leads to the suspension of identification with one’s own sensory impressions, emotions and thoughts and ultimately to deep awareness, to the pure I, to the Self.<sup>13</sup>

## Beyond the Higher Self and the Soul – the Divine Self

In the Indian tradition, the term “Atman” is used for the terms “higher self” or “soul”.<sup>14</sup> When asked what Atman, the soul, is, the Indian spiritual teacher Mother Meera answers: “The atman comes from the Paramatman. Just as the atman is essential for the body so is Paramatman important for the atman.”<sup>15</sup>

Mother Meera sees Paramatman, as “the greatest” and “the origin, the essence of the entire universe. There is no place without it but it has no name or form.”<sup>16</sup>

Also the spiritual teacher Sri Chinmoy (1931-2007), who from 1970 until the end of his life conducted peace meditations twice a week for delegates and employees at the UN headquarters in New York, sees the soul as the link to the Supreme: “The Inner Pilot is our Lord Supreme, and the soul is the representative of the Inner Pilot, of our Lord Beloved Supreme. [...] The way the soul is the representative of God, even so, the body, vital, mind and heart are also supposed to be the representatives of the soul.”<sup>17</sup>

*The soul acts as a protector  
during our lives,  
and is always with us.  
It has no wishes of its own.  
It is not only a witness  
or guide but also helps  
our development.  
Free from the influence  
of our actions,  
it remains permanently  
with us through our lives  
until we unite with the Divine.*

Mother Meera



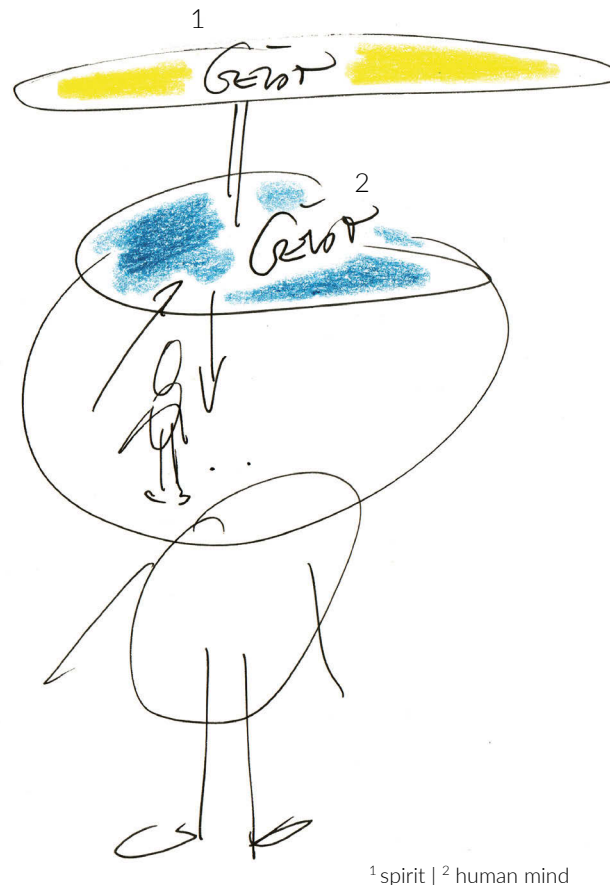
## The Ego

The reason that these representatives quoted above cannot act as instruments of the soul is the existence of the ego. “The ego is that very thing which limits us in every sphere of life. [...] The ordinary human ego gives us the sense of separate identity, separate consciousness. No doubt, the sense of individuality, of self-importance, is necessary at a certain stage in man’s development. But the ego separates our individual consciousness from the universal consciousness.”<sup>18</sup>

In the book *Courage and Contentment* by Indian spiritual teacher Swami Chidvilasananda, the ego is defined as “limited sense of ‘I’ that is identified with the body, mind, and senses; sometimes described as ‘the veil of suffering.’”<sup>19</sup>

For the Indian spiritual teacher and peace activist Vishnu Devananda (1927-1993), identification with the ego causes suffering and also prevents alignment with the higher Self: “The cause of this predicament is the *ahamkara*, or ego. [...] This *ahamkara* is the cause of all bondage and is the chief barrier to the experience of inner Reality.”<sup>20</sup>

In order to free oneself from the clutches of the ego, according to Mother Meera the gaze must be shifted to the Divine: “Every human being has an ego. It is better not to give so much importance to the ego or to name and fame. Try to know that Paramatman is the greatest, then there is no ego.”<sup>21</sup>



Divine spirit and the human mind

If people learn to align themselves with the Divine and strengthen their connection to the higher Self or the soul, they become less susceptible to influences and role models that reinforce the ego or the I-related self-concept and self-image. Then this divine alignment ultimately leads to inner harmony and contentment.<sup>22</sup>

From only the few sources mentioned in the text above it is already evident that many terms for the self exist in the various scriptures. In the following – for a better understanding and a clearer overview – the different designations mentioned are classified according to their meaning into the two levels of the Self described earlier in this section:

- The LOWER SELF: Non-Self, Ego<sup>23</sup>, I, contaminated I, other I, conscious I, personal I, personality
- The HIGHER SELF: Self, inner Self, real Self, spiritual Self, transpersonal Self, atman, soul, infinite I, pure I, spiritual I, true I

## Mind and Spirit

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the mind can be both a friend and an enemy.<sup>24</sup> Its role is determined by that with which the mind is aligned (see also section “Intellect and Intuition”, p. 39). To the question “What is the difference between the mind and the Self?” Ramana Maharshi answers: “There is no difference. The mind turned inwards is the Self; turned outwards, it becomes the ego and all the world. [...] But the mind does not exist apart from the Self, that is, it has no independent existence. The Self exists without the mind, never the mind without the Self.”<sup>25</sup> The inward direction builds the connection to the Self, to the soul. Directed outward, the mind relates to our psyche – this means to our cognitive faculties, which also relates to our feelings and emotions.

In addition to mind, the term spirit must also be considered in a differentiated way.<sup>26</sup> Spirit can refer to a person’s charisma, but can also refer to the ABSOLUTE, the DIVINE. This particular aspect, the “Divine Spirit”, plays an especially important role in meditation. Assagioli describes this level as follows: “The Spirit in itself is the highest reality, in its transcendent, that is, absolute aspect, free from any limitation and concrete determination. The Spirit transcends all the limits of time and space, breaks all material fetters. In its essence it is eternal, infinite, free

and universal. This highest, absolute reality cannot be intellectually grasped, for it is beyond the human mind; but it can be rationally postulated, intuitively grasped, and to some extent mystically experienced.”<sup>27</sup>

In order for this divine spirit to manifest as pure consciousness, as a spark of God, in the physical world, in matter, an intermediary is needed: the higher Self or soul, which then in turn acts on the personality and its carriers, the mind, the emotions and the body.

These carriers, however, are for a long time only oriented to the physical world via the senses, which results in a life that is – as mentioned in the text section Ego – identity-related and led in limitation.

The true goal of the soul, however, is to dissolve the limitation of the personality vehicles and to raise them to its level, so that ultimately the “highest Truth”<sup>28</sup> can be realized in the physical world.<sup>29</sup>

Mother Meera describes this as follows: “The atman guides our development and is the basis or root cause of all our physical and subtle bodies. It works through all the various bodies to experience everything and then will take all this experience back to Paramatman in realization.”<sup>30</sup>

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- <sup>6</sup> Fürst 1985, p. 100 [Author's translation].
- <sup>7</sup> For a detailed description of the life and work of Roberto Assagioli see Giovetti 2007.
- <sup>8</sup> Giovetti 2007, p. 110 [Author's translation].
- <sup>9</sup> Assagioli preferred the term “transpersonal” instead of “spiritual” as he considered it more neutral and scientific (see Giovetti 2007, p. 182).
- <sup>10</sup> Assagioli 2008, p. 31 [Author's translation]; see also Assagioli 2010, S. 10 f. as well as Assagioli 2012, S. 15 f.
- <sup>11</sup> Maharshi 2017, p. 74.
- <sup>12</sup> Maharshi 2017, p. 73 f.; see also Singer 2007, p. 28 f.
- <sup>13</sup> Cf. Maharshi 2011, p. 18 f.; see also Singer 2007, p. 29 as well as Hazrat Inayat Khan 2016, p. 251 f.
- <sup>14</sup> Cf. Singer 2007, p. 29; see also Giovetti 2007, p. 104 f.
- <sup>15</sup> Mother Meera 2019, p. 125; see also Yogananda 2010, p. 68.
- <sup>16</sup> Mother Meera 2006, p. 14.
- <sup>17</sup> Sri Chinmoy 2015, p. 755. That the mind should be in service to the soul, see also Hazrat Inayat Khan 2019, p. 337.
- <sup>18</sup> Sri Chinmoy 1966, p. 12; according to Maharshi, this is also the moment when the ego arises: “The I-thought is the first thought of the mind. It is the ego (the individual I-feeling, Ahamkara).” Maharshi 2011a, p. 20 f.
- <sup>19</sup> Chidvilasananda 1999, p. 163; Maharshi sees the mind in this context as the “inner sense organ”, see Maharshi 2006, p. 13.
- <sup>20</sup> Vishnu Devananda 1981, p. 3.
- <sup>21</sup> Mother Meera 2006, p. 30; see also Sri Chinmoy 1966, p. 13.
- <sup>22</sup> Cf. Sri Chinmoy 2012, p. 6; Assagioli 2010, p. 155 ff.
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- <sup>25</sup> Maharshi 2017, p. 16.
- <sup>26</sup> Cf. Assagioli 2008, p. 204.
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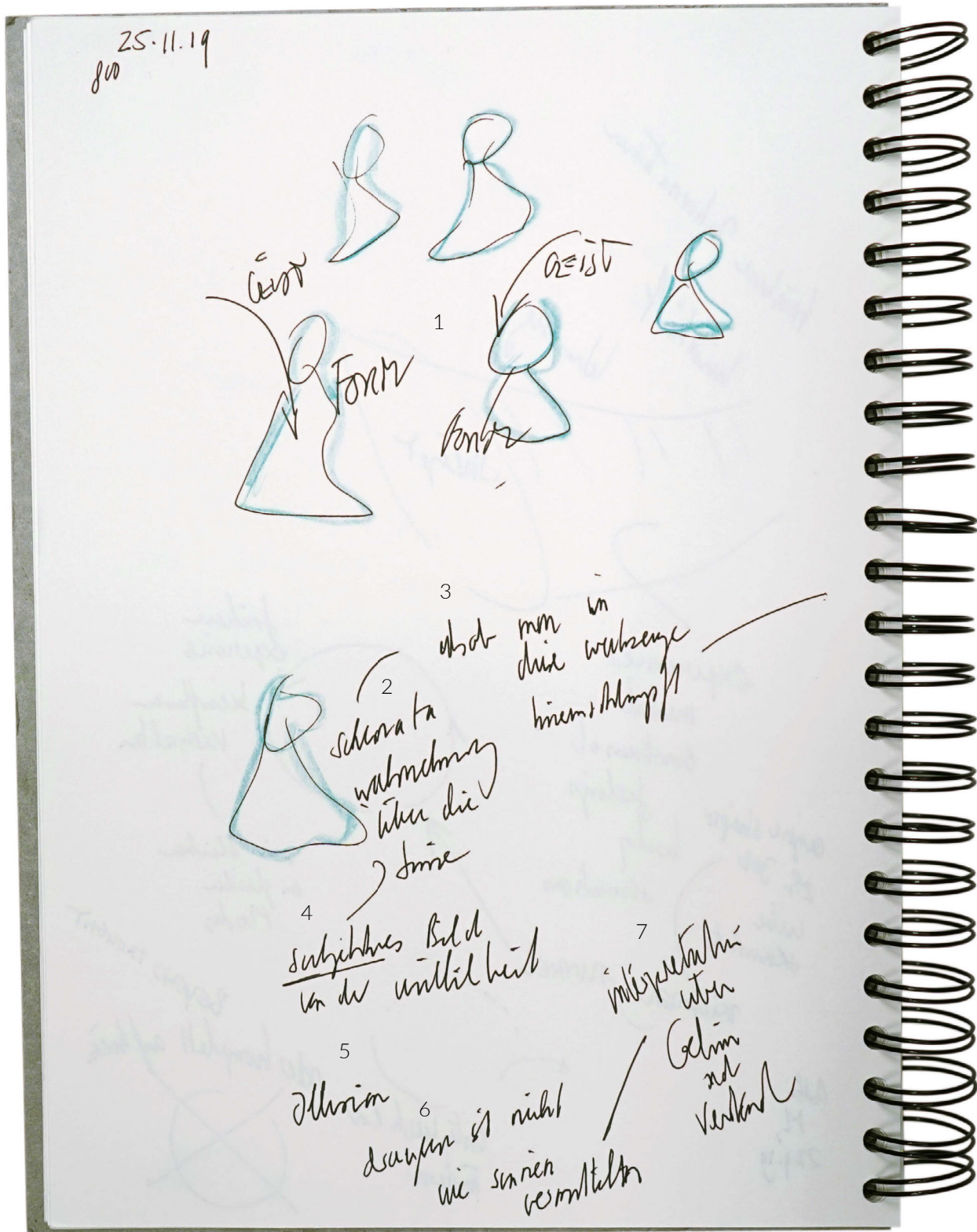
<sup>1</sup> In some writings a third, finer level of the self is also distinguished: the impersonal self, the monad.

<sup>2</sup> Muktananda 1989, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Kahler / Nitsch 1994, p. 426 [Author's translation]. For a short introduction to the topic “soul” see Haug 2018, p. 10 ff. and 197 ff.

Spirit enters the form. The outer form of man is only the shell.



<sup>1</sup> spirit, form | <sup>2</sup> thought patterns, perception through the senses | <sup>3</sup> one slips into these vehicles | <sup>4</sup> subjective image of reality | <sup>5</sup> illusion | <sup>6</sup> outside is not as the senses convey it | <sup>7</sup> interpretation via brain and mind



# The Heart, Love and the Self are Educational Subjects Too – a Field Report<sup>1</sup>

## An experience of the heart

Have you heard of the town of Delft? It's best known for its world renowned blue and white porcelain. Together with Amsterdam, it was an important trading hub during the Netherland's Golden Age. For many centuries, it's also been the final resting place for members of the Dutch royal family. With its many canals and manor houses steeped in history, the beautiful old town of Delft is also known for its magical light – which the painter Johannes Vermeer most famously was able to capture in perfect detail. This is the city where I was born.

When I was young – about 13 years old, I used to deliver the morning paper with my older sister. My mother would wake us up at five in the morning every day, and we would take our bikes to the paper warehouse where we'd stuff our bike bags full of newspapers. Riding to the center of the city, we'd each take the subscriber addresses assigned to us. We were usually home by 6:30 a.m., where our mother, expecting us, had prepared a big pot of brinta, a warm porridge. Soon after breakfast we'd head off to school.

This memory suddenly came back to me, during a meditation retreat for university lecturers at the Benediktushof – Centre for Meditation and Mindfulness, in Holzkirchen near Würzburg, in October 2019. It was Tuesday, the second day of the retreat, exactly at 6am, during the first walking meditation. I had joined the other seminar participants gathered in the courtyard. As it was pretty cold due to the winter season, most of us were wrapped in warm jackets, hats and scarves. We walked round and round in a big circle attentively, silently, but still at a brisk pace. The ground surface was cobblestone, the same material that makes up many of the streets lining Delft's canals. The ringing of the bells in the church nearby abruptly brought back a memory of the church bells in Delft. There the bells ring every half hour, and the Nieuwe Kerk on the market place has a carillon, which sounds a little melody every quarter hour. As I walked, step by step and in silence, my childhood home was suddenly present before me. I could see the early morning

fog over the canals and the narrow streets; feel the cold on my fingers during those winter days and smell the porridge as if it was in front of me.

Most importantly, my mother was there. I saw how she lovingly embraced my sister and me before we left the house in the morning. I could suddenly see and feel the love she had for us. I saw my mother surrounded by this love that passed through her and emanated from her; this love energy moved from behind her head to her shoulders and forward to her chest. Love was fully present; I perceived its essence and it touched me deeply.

At the same time, in the midst of this totally unexpected experience, rational thoughts came to my mind: what was she thinking as she waved to my sister and me just before we turned off on the bicycles at the end of the road? We were still quite young, and being on the road alone so early in the morning was not without its dangers. Would everything be alright? Another thought came to me: she rose so early for us every day, and was always there to prepare the warm porridge for us.

As the thoughts gradually subsided, another picture emerged. Surrounding my sister and me, I could see a field of love energy that interacted with that of my mother's. At the same time, all three of us were surrounded by an even larger, all-encompassing force field. We were in the middle of this field, which seemed to expand around us. While I had this picture in mind, so present and real as if it were yesterday, it became clear to me: this power is always present, everywhere. It was there then, and is still here now. It holds everything together.

As I slowly did my walking meditation rounds, I could now feel my heart more and more. It was a strong, extraordinary force that filled me. I was pervaded by a deep feeling of security and peace accompanied by the grateful certainty that all is well.

Suddenly the bright ringing of hand bells sounded: the walking meditation was ending. The participants of our seminar group made their way towards the meditation room. I quickly first went to get some hot tea, as I attempted to process what had just taken place.

Did this experience really come out of nowhere, or was there an explanation behind it? Could it have been related to events from the day before, when upon arrival, we had received an introduction to Zen? This had also led to a lively discussion about the conditioning of the human being and the meaning of emptiness. I was plagued by the question of whether, in the observation and analysis of thought, we get too entangled in rational explanations. Wouldn't it be more sensible to seek silence directly, in order to experience this power in a direct way – as repeatedly reported on by mystics both East and West? And is it perhaps the same power shown to me during my walking meditation that awaits one there in the field of stillness? Is that what we call love? And is this guiding force the core of our being? Our soul? Our higher Self?

In this context, our Zen master, Alexander Poraj, shared a contemplative phrase during the common sitting meditation: “The breath is not there because I breathe; I am there, because there is the breath.” Seen in this light, the question arises as to what inner essence breathes for us. What works through us? The philosophy behind the Zen garden in the Benedictine monastery was a metaphor: “In a Zen garden, the essence of every plant and every tree is made visible.”

The unexpected and intense experience that had occurred during the walking meditation remained with me all week. Although afterwards we frequently practiced walking meditation, it was no longer so intense. Yet, during the early walking meditation on Thursday, the space around me seemed to change. The steps of the other seminar participants seemed quieter. Their shape also changed; it was more shadow-like. I spontaneously recalled the allegory of Plato's cave, in which a group of people live their lives chained to the wall of a cave. They notice shadows on the cave wall, but since they cannot see those who cast the shadows, they assume the shadows to be living beings themselves. I asked myself: do we really see the people around us? What if we were able to perceive more their true essence? In the same way that in a zen garden, the unique essence of each plant and tree can be seen.

## Being mindful

On Thursday afternoon, as we shared our experiences of silence from the previous days, one participant noted: “Everything is more intense: more wind, more light, birds, butterflies; everything has increased in intensity!”

I could easily relate to this and found the statement to be quite true. At the same time, I was also conscious of the idea that in mindfulness practices that relate to everyday actions there is a general danger of wanting too much – and that these are then carried out too self-consciously or too mechanically: “I *must* now eat mindfully, I *must* now walk mindfully, etc.”.

The Christian tradition differentiates between different forms of seeing: seeing through sensory perception, seeing through the mind and seeing with the heart.<sup>2</sup> It's this last level that matters. When you connect mindfulness to your heart, practicing becomes very natural. Looking back on my experience, this point proves meaningful. We were connected through our hearts; it was through our hearts that love enveloped us. And all this was happening, whether or not I was aware of it at the time.

I ask myself what it would be like if we could more consciously perceive and express such a heart connection in everyday life? Perhaps the mind would no longer occupy the role it usually does, meaning that we would only use the mind when a particular situation requires it.

The Indian spiritual teacher Nisargadatta Maharaj (1897-1981) said about the mind: “When you totally realize that ‘You are’, but not conditioned by this body-mind, you will be one with the whole world.”<sup>3</sup>

And the Benedictine monk, Zen master and founder of the Benediktushof, Willigis Jäger (1925-2020) writes in his book *Kontemplation – ein spiritueller Weg [Contemplation – a Spiritual Path]*: “It's correct: our mind makes us human. But we must stop identifying with it. It's only the tool, an instrument upon which our true being plays.”<sup>4</sup>

We might not have to do so much to allow this “true being” to play and act freely. Perhaps it's simply a matter of just being. With regard to the practice of mindfulness, however, the question arises as to whether I can really be in the moment if I perceive myself as an observer observing the observed. The Indian spiritual teacher Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986) often spoke in his lectures about perception and the dissolution of the ego. In answer to the question “How can we perceive our own mind when the mind is the perceiver as well as that which it perceives?” Krishnamurti first illuminates the thinking that

*But the moment you have  
in your heart this extraordinary thing  
called love and feel the depth,  
the delight, the ecstasy of it,  
you will discover that for you  
the world is transformed.*

Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986)

produces the I, the thinker, the perceiver, the observer, thus producing a split. At first glance, the perceiver seems to be an independent entity, but in the end the perceiver is also created by thinking.<sup>5</sup> It is about going one level further. “When you look at a flower, when you just see it, at the moment is there an entity who sees? Or is there only seeing?”<sup>6</sup>

For Nisargadatta Maharaj, the difficulty lies in verbalizing the observer: “To say: I am only the witness is both false and true: false because of the ‘I am’, true because of the witness. It is better to say: ‘there is witnessing.’ The moment you say: ‘I am’, the entire universe comes into being along with its creator.”<sup>7</sup> What he thinks is about the resolution of this term: “You have to be one with the Self, the ‘I Am’. If you say ‘knowledge’, it is just the same as information. If necessary, discard the words ‘I Am’. Even without the words you are that ‘You are’. Do not say or even think that ‘You are’. Just be aware of the Presence without thinking about it.”<sup>8</sup>

## Loneliness and isolation

Giving up the habit of verbalizing the observer can promote a feeling of loneliness and aloneness. There is then no point of reference: “I go, I see, I ...” becomes “go, see ...” For Krishnamurti, however, there is a clear difference between loneliness and being alone. Krishnamurti: “You know, there is a vast difference between loneliness and aloneness. [...] The mind knows this fear when for a moment it realizes that it can rely on nothing, that no distraction can take away the sense of self-enclosing emptiness. That is loneliness. But aloneness is something entirely different; it is a state of freedom which comes into being when you have gone through loneliness and understand it.”<sup>9</sup>

Krishnamurti stresses that it is important to deal with this loneliness: “All this is part of education: to face the ache of loneliness, that extraordinary feeling of emptiness which all of us know, and not be frightened when it comes; not to turn on the radio, lose one-self in work, or run to the cinema, but to look at it, go into it, understand it.”<sup>10</sup> Not being constantly distracted and instead seeking silence is essential for exploring the “inner space.”<sup>11</sup> Indeed: “Very few go beyond this extraordinary fear of loneliness; but one *must* go beyond it, because beyond it lies the real treasure.”<sup>12</sup>

The Benedictine monk David Steindl-Rast sees the heart as a way to dissolve loneliness. “When we reach our innermost heart, we reach a realm where we are not only intimately at home with ourselves, but intimately united with others, all others. The heart is not a lonely place. It is the realm where solitude and togetherness coincide.”<sup>13</sup> For him, it is the special moments of being alone, such as a nice walk, a mountain hike, a sunrise, when we can feel connected to everything: “It felt as if your heart were expanding, as if your being were expanding to embrace everything, as if the barriers were in some way broken down or dissolved and you were one with all.”<sup>14</sup>

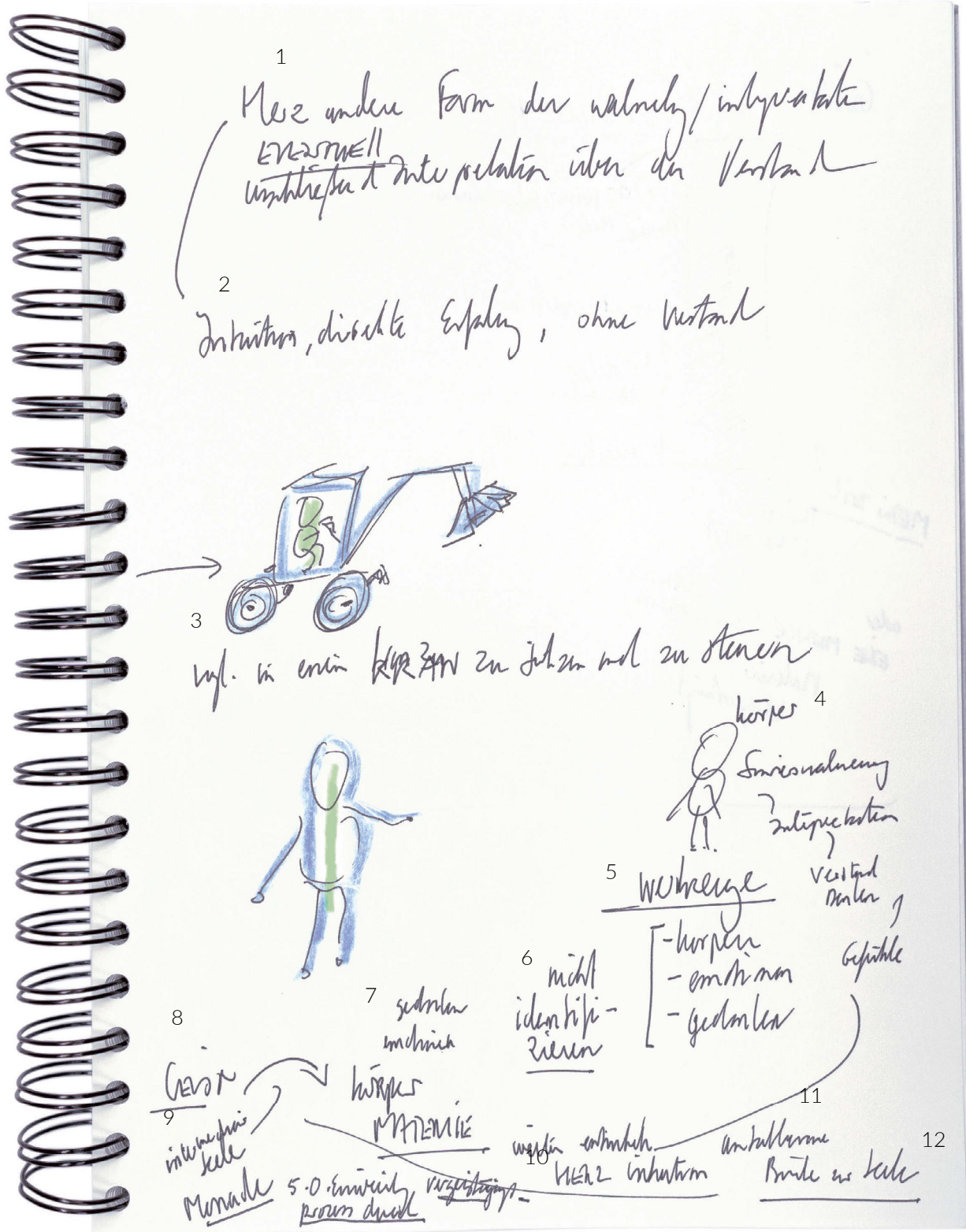
For Willigis Jäger it is love that provides security: “It is love that gives trust and strength and thus the certainty of being caught and carried.”<sup>15</sup> Buddhist teacher Jack Kornfield also described this aspect of love: “Love is a blessed mystery. It is like gravity: vast, invisible, the unstoppable force that connects all things”.<sup>16</sup> This love is in us too, it is our essence. Nisargadatta emphasizes: “The very nature of the self is love”<sup>17</sup>; and elsewhere: “‘I amness’, awareness without thought, is love.”<sup>18</sup>

## Outlook

The connection to the inner self helps us to see more clearly what’s important in life and to act accordingly. If you ask dying people what they regret most about looking back at their life, it turns out that they would have liked to express their feelings more, to have maintained contact with friends more, to have not worked so much and had more courage to live life the way they would have liked.<sup>19</sup>

When Nisargadatta Maharaj was once asked by a woman why she had been unhappy all her life, he replied: “Because you did not go down to the very roots of your being. It is your complete ignorance of yourself, that

We are in one body - our vehicle. It's as if we were sitting in a tractor.



<sup>1</sup> the heart another form of perception / interpretation; subsequent interpretations eventually come via the mind | <sup>2</sup> intuition, direct experience, without the mind | <sup>3</sup> like sitting in a crane and steering | <sup>4</sup> body, sensory perception, interpretation, mind, thinking, feeling | <sup>5</sup> vehicles; body, emotions, thoughts | <sup>6</sup> not identifying (with ...) | <sup>7</sup> thoughts | <sup>8</sup> spirit, body, matter | <sup>9</sup> interaction soul | <sup>10</sup> heart, intuition | <sup>11</sup> antahkarana | <sup>12</sup> bridge to the soul



*People who truly know  
and experience the scriptures  
understand things not just  
from books but from the heart.  
And the heart is  
the greatest library.*

Swami Chidvilasananda

covered up your love and happiness and made you seek for what you have never lost. Love is will, the will to share your happiness with all. Being happy – making happy – this is the rhythm of love.”<sup>20</sup>

In his book *Über die Liebe [About Love]*, Willigis Jäger describes the effect a near-death experience had on him: “What remained behind after this experience was the certainty: when I die, I will return to this infinite love, without any I-limitation. And this love is the source of all being. Our I with all its encrustations and selfish imprints only constantly covers it up. I realized that we as human beings will not progress if we do not succeed in growing into this level of experience of unconditional love.”<sup>21</sup>

Arriving at the central station in Munich after the five-day retreat on Friday afternoon, I notice it’s quite an adjustment; so many impressions, the hectic pace, everything is loud, the people chasing past me, like shadows. Immediately Plato’s allegory of the cave is again present. And again the question arises in my mind: Do we really see each other? Do we recognize our true essence? And at the same time I feel the feeling of connectedness – that this essence is present in all of us.

A chief aim of the retreat at Benediktushof was to enable more effective exchange among university teachers on the implementation of mindfulness and meditation approaches at universities. For me, looking back, this closes the circle. After such a deep experience of the heart, it became clear to me once again how important it is to make sufficient room for the topics of the heart and love, as well as the connection to the inner self in daily life – and therefore also at universities.

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<sup>1</sup> The experiences described in this text section occurred during the incubation workshop *Achtsame Hochschulen – Innehalten und Vorwärtsschreiten*, to which I was invited by my colleagues Mike Sandbothe and Reyk Albrecht. The event was an offer of the Thuringian Model Mindful Universities and took place from October 7-11, 2019 at Benediktushof – Center for Meditation and Mindfulness in Holzkirchen near Würzburg, [www.benediktushof-holzkirchen.de](http://www.benediktushof-holzkirchen.de) (accessed September 13, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Jäger 2015, p. 125 f.

<sup>3</sup> Nisargadatta 2014, p. 55.

<sup>4</sup> Jäger 2015, p. 9 f. [Author's translation].

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Krishnamurti 1989, p. 195.

<sup>6</sup> Krishnamurti 1989, p. 195.

<sup>7</sup> Nisargadatta 2009, p. 346.

<sup>8</sup> Nisargadatta 2014, p. 15. Nisargadatta Maharaj distinguishes in his teachings between the verbal and the non-verbal I am. An exercise on the "non-verbal I am" is shown by the long-time disciple of Nisargadatta Maharaj and founder of quantum psychology, Stephen H. Wolinsky, Ph.D., under "What is the I am?", "Nisargadatta Maharaj / Experiential Meditation", [www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE6kS7vVsXw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE6kS7vVsXw) (accessed September 13, 2020). The exercise is also part of the film *I Am That I Am. Experience the Teachings of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj – Part 1* (2009, 7:33-16:39 min.). For more in-depth information, see the short article by Jack Kornfield about his experience with Nisargadatta: "Jack Kornfield on Nisargadatta Maharaj (2)", [www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXuF8qmv5Nc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXuF8qmv5Nc) (accessed September 13, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Krishnamurti 1989, p. 201. See also Krishnamurti 2010, p. 69 f.

<sup>10</sup> Krishnamurti 1989, p. 201.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Krishnamurti 1989, p. 199 f.

<sup>12</sup> Krishnamurti 1989, p. 201.

<sup>13</sup> Steindl-Rast 1984, p. 29

<sup>14</sup> Steindl-Rast 2016, p. 47 f.

<sup>15</sup> Jäger 2017, p. 115 [Author's translation].

<sup>16</sup> Kornfield 2008, p. 68.

<sup>17</sup> Nisargadatta 2009, p. 201.

<sup>18</sup> Nisargadatta 2014, p. 76.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Ware 2012

<sup>20</sup> Nisargadatta 2009, p. 235.

<sup>21</sup> Jäger 2017, p. 133 [Author's translation].

# Intellect and Intuition

The primary focus of today's system of higher education is oriented to cognitive development for the purpose of preparing students for their future professional life. What has been taught up to this point, with few exceptions, concerns the training of the INTELLECT. Through rational thinking, connections are to be recognized by the mind. Skills such as reasoning, estimating, arguing, drawing conclusions and making choices are taught, enabling students to arrive at conclusive judgements, to acquire knowledge and to develop expertise.

However there is also another way that knowledge is acquired, which has little to do with the above-mentioned intellectual approach: INTUITION. This provides us with access to knowledge that is not achieved through a discursive approach. To use the words of Albert Einstein (1879-1955) again: "The intellect has little to do on the road to discovery. There is a leap of consciousness, call it intuition or what you will, and the solution comes to you and you don't know how or why."<sup>1</sup> Intuitive perception arises immediately and proceeds without methodical and conscious conclusions; it is infallible and able to grasp the "truth" holistically.

Intuition inspires (lat. inspiratio, "breathing in") and animates (spiritus) us. An appropriate definition of intuition, including its innate relationship to the self, or the soul, can be found in the work of Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952), the Indian founder of the Self-Realization Fellowship, who in the 1920s spread yoga and meditation in the West: "Intuition is that faculty of the soul which at once directly perceives the truth about anything. Without the power of intuition, you cannot know Truth. Intuition means 'soul-perception', and is the knowing power of the soul, without the help of the senses or the mind. Intuition can give you knowledge about things that your senses and understanding can never give."<sup>2</sup> And because intuition contains this connection to another source of inspiration, another LEVEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS, it is often the basis for creative discoveries of a spiritual and/or material nature.

If, for example, one looks at the genesis of the works of the great masters in painting or music, it is not uncommon to mention a connection with the "Divine" as a source of inspiration for the creative process. It is known of the composer Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

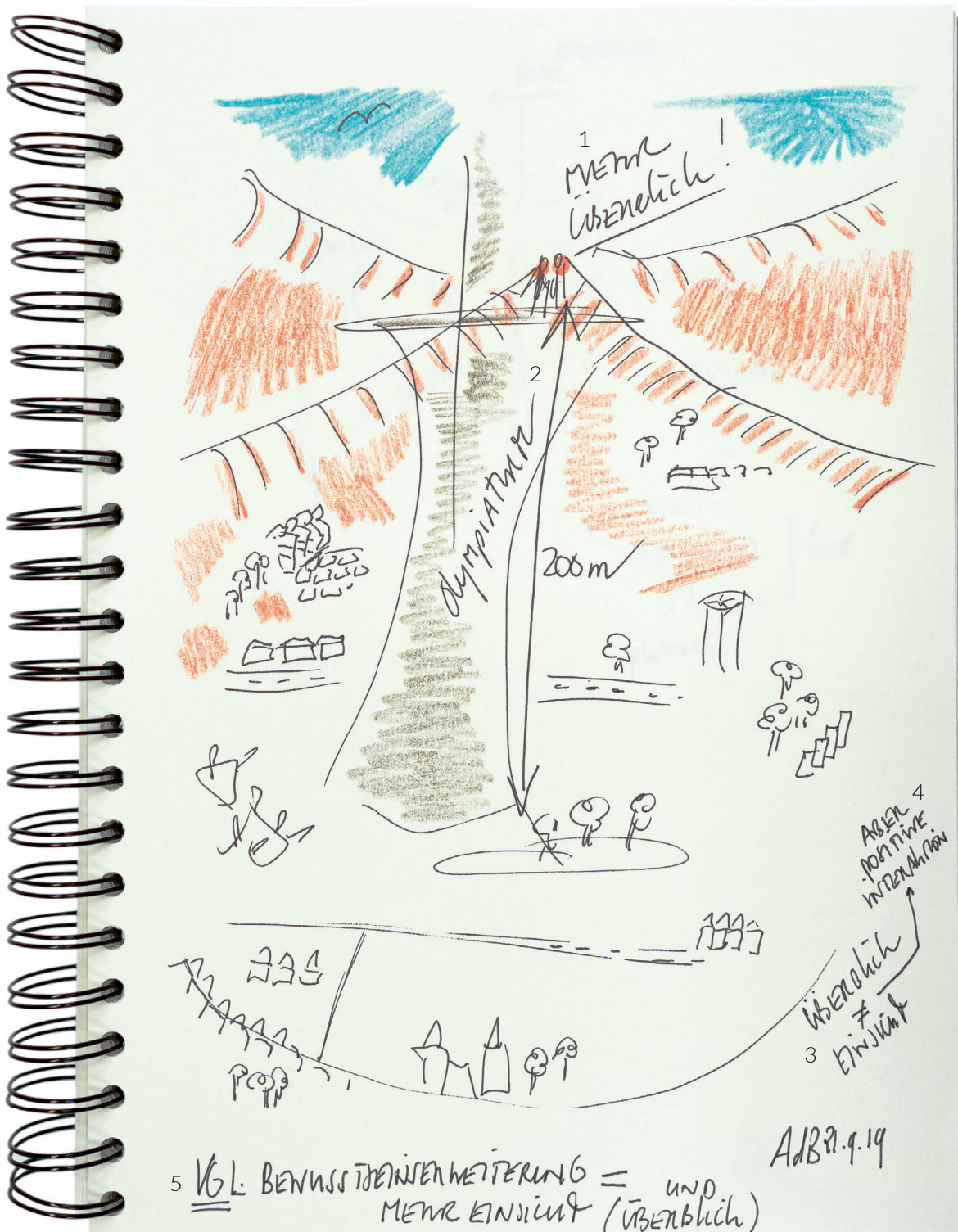
*Intuition is a divine gift,  
the thinking mind a faithful servant.  
It is paradoxical that nowadays  
we have begun to worship the servant  
and desecrate the divine gift.*

Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

that once, when asked where he gets his inspiration from, he answered: "Not I, the Father that dwelleth within me, He doeth the works."<sup>3</sup> He said that he had to focus very hard in order not to miss a single bit of inspiration. "Straightaway the ideas flow in upon me, directly from God, and not only do I see distinct themes in my mind's eye, but they are clothed in the right forms, harmonies and orchestration."<sup>4</sup> Brahms continues: "I have to be in a semi-trance condition to get such results – a condition when the conscious mind is in temporary abeyance and the subconscious is in control, for it is through the subconscious mind, which is part of Omnipotence, that the inspiration comes."<sup>5</sup> He emphasized that this condition is by no means comparable with dreaming, but is like a constant struggle: "I have to be careful, however, not to lose consciousness, otherwise the ideas fade away. [...] Therefore, to evolve and grow, man must learn how to use and develop his own soul forces. All great creative geniuses do this, although some of them do not seem to be as conscious of the process as others."<sup>6</sup> And although many advanced thinkers, as Brahms states, are not necessarily aware of their own intuitive processes, the question arises as to how man might learn to be conscious of and connect with his own soul forces.

My niece and I on the Olympic Tower in Munich. From above one sees things very differently. One has an overview and sees horizontal connections.

That's what an expansion of consciousness might feel like. But strictly speaking, another dimension must be added to this, to grasp the vertical depth.



<sup>1</sup> more "big picture" | <sup>2</sup> Olympic Tower | <sup>3</sup> "big picture" ≠ insight | <sup>4</sup> but positive interaction | <sup>5</sup> like expansion of consciousness = more insight (and "big picture")



## The alignment of the mind

If we compare these two processes, the acquisition of knowledge by means of the intellect versus the intuition, an important difference that emerges has to do with the mind's orientation. On the intellectual path, the thinking faculty is directed outwards and registers the external information and stimuli that are transmitted to the brain via the senses. It also recognizes the sensations and mental ideas that go along with them and correlates it all.

On the intuitive path, the mind turns in a different direction, towards the inner world. Through the process of intuitive perception, soul forces are directed to the thinker's respective area of experience.

The development of this ability requires mental training that leads to connection with the soul.

## Concentration, meditation and intuition

A conscious orientation of the mind requires CONCENTRATION. The Indian spiritual teacher and peace activist Vishnu Devananda (1927-1993) points out that this helps us to direct the mind in one direction. "The main aim of concentration is to bring the mind to the same point or object again and again by limiting its movements in the beginning to a small circle."<sup>7</sup> If one manages to keep concentration longer and stay focused, one will – according to Devananda – enter the stage of meditation: "A time will come when the mind will stick to one point alone, like the continuous sound of a church bell. This is meditation, the fruit of constant and protracted practice of concentration."<sup>8</sup>

The silence that meditation creates enables contact with the inner being, with the soul. "It is secured in meditation when the mind is fully concentrated, far away from objects and near the *Atman*, the Self."<sup>9</sup> It is the level where thoughts are silent and the mind is transformed.<sup>10</sup> "True meditation is to become free from mentation. The moment the thoughts become still, the light of the Self will shine from within."<sup>11</sup>

The spiritual teacher Sri Chinmoy (1931-2007), a writer, poet, composer, musician, artist and athlete, said: "When we meditate, what we actually do is enter into the deeper part of our being. At that time, we are able to bring to the fore the wealth that we have deep within us."<sup>12</sup>

It's not possible to reach this depth via the intellect, because the mind is directed outwards and consequently operates on the surface level. From this vantage point the intellect is subordinate to the INTUITION.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the intellect also serves an important function. Nevertheless, the intellect also serves an important function. In order to ultimately manifest the inner potential in the world, the respective "skill", the handling of the corresponding knowledge and thus also the intellect, is required, depending on the subject area. In the case of Brahms this was his ability to compose. If he had not had this gift, he would have heard the music inwardly, but without his capacity to express it, humanity would have been deprived of his compositions.

As the emphasis of education at universities is still based on the training of the intellect, the world is not able to access a wealth of knowledge and inspiration that it could draw from the intuition.

It is therefore advisable that not only the intellect but also the intuition be consciously promoted within the framework of a holistic pursuit of knowledge through universities and other educational institutions. To this end, regular concentration and meditation exercises could serve as a valuable contribution.

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<sup>1</sup> Indirect quotation, source is no longer found [AdB].

<sup>2</sup> Yogananda 2010, p. 116 f.

<sup>3</sup> Abell 1994, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 5 f.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 6 f.

<sup>7</sup> Vishnu Devananda 1981, p. 31.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.; see also Assagioli 2010, S. 162 f.

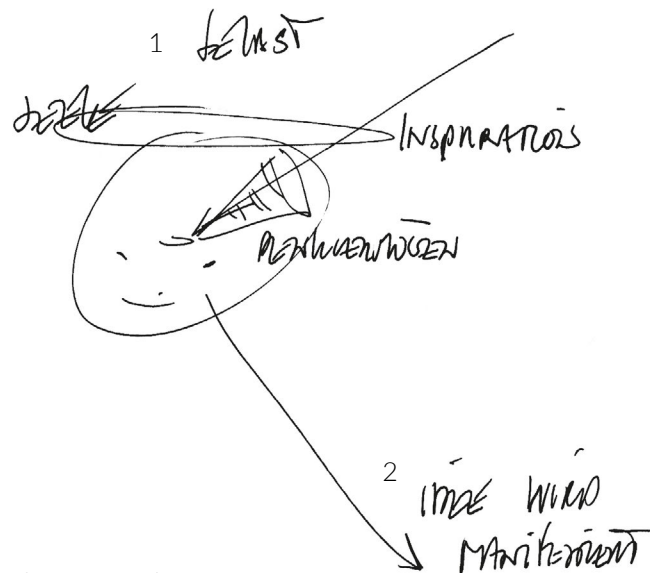
<sup>9</sup> Vishnu Devananda 1981, p. 35.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Krishnamurti 1989, p. 196.

<sup>11</sup> Muktananda 1999, p. 36.

<sup>12</sup> Sri Chinmoy 1974b, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Hazrat Inayat Khan 2016, p. 291 f.



When the mind is aligned with the inner silence, inspiration via soul impulses can be recognized as ideas. If the mind is then directed to the outside world, these ideas can be manifested in the world.

<sup>1</sup> soul, self, inspiration, mind | <sup>2</sup> ideas are made manifest

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# Research

*If you want to understand the mind,  
then meditate.*

Buddhist monk

## Exploration of the mind

Recent decades have seen an enormous increase in research on mindfulness and meditation. In the 1970s, there were only a handful of publications<sup>1</sup> dedicated to the science on this topic. But since 2010, this has shifted and several hundred are now published annually.<sup>2</sup> In particular, it's the neurosciences that have taken on this field of research, investigating how mindfulness and meditation influence the body and mind. For example, using scientific measurements, brain researchers have proven that meditation trains and changes certain areas of the brain. Yet, while numerous important findings have thus been compiled, many questions remain unanswered. Is it truly possible to grasp the human mind? Is consciousness measurable?

During his world tour in 1974, the well-known Indian teacher, Swami Muktananda (1908-1982) was asked by a brainwave researcher if he, as a Self-realized master would allow his brain waves to be explored. He answered: “[...] that consciousness is too subtle to be captured by a machine. He added that if the researcher wanted to know what a meditator's experience is like, he could come to his laboratory and experience meditation for himself.”<sup>3</sup>

The documentary *Monks in the Laboratory* by Delphine Morel also points out the difficulty of measuring stages of deep meditation. In order to study very experienced yogis, the scientists in the film had to travel to them – as they had lived for years in complete seclusion, refusing to come to the scientists' laboratories. Thus, the laboratory had to be brought to them, so to speak. These yogis were quite skeptical as to whether the research projects would have any effect; they countered with comments like: “The mind has neither smell nor color, but is simply a space in which different phenomena exist. How will you measure this?”<sup>4</sup>

Yet research has so far succeeded in revealing a great deal about the mind. Here, research on the mind refers to the psyche, to the level of our thinking and feeling – and in connection with this, to our behavior. It's specifically about the effects of mindfulness and meditation on the brain. Modern equipment renders these effects visible. The present text will highlight this field's most current and significant findings, while also addressing the challenges facing mindfulness and meditation research.

The above-mentioned film *Monks in the Laboratory* focuses on an exchange (Mind and Life Dialogues<sup>5</sup>) between the 14th Dalai Lama and scientists from various disciplines (see “Mindfulness and Meditation in the Educational System – a Paradigm Shift?”, p. 17). One topic the dialogue addresses is how to deal with destructive emotions such as suffering, hatred, jealousy, greed and fear. From the perspective of the Mind and Life team, understanding these emotions and exploring them is one of the most important challenges of the 21st century. As the researchers state, a better understanding of both constructive and destructive emotions would be of great benefit to everyone, but also to society and ultimately to humanity as a whole. In order to further explore the topic of destructive emotions, in Dharamsala (India) in the year 2000, a meeting was held in which the Dalai Lama and several monks spent a week engaging in extensive dialogue with Western scientists. These dialogues are recorded in the book: *Destructive Emotions: How Can We Overcome Them? A Scientific Dialogue with the Dalai Lama* written by Daniel Goleman – who is also the author of the book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, and also brought this expression into mainstream use. The Mind and Life team was able to prove that mindfulness and meditation approaches have demonstrable positive effects in managing emotions. Numerous scientific studies have now been conducted in the laboratories of the Mind and Life researchers. Not only does mindfulness and meditation relax the mind and body, it's also been found to influence and sometimes even restructure areas of the brain.

## Scientific findings and Research questions

The above-mentioned findings have significantly contributed to the growing social interest in mindfulness and meditation and their introduction into many other fields of activity. A new branch of research, CONTEMPLATIVE NEUROSCIENCE, has also emerged from the field of neuroscience.<sup>6</sup> An important component of contemplative neuroscience is NEUROPLASTICITY, which states that “the brain is an organ of ongoing experience. It continues to grow and change and reshape itself across our entire life span in response to experience, right into old age.”<sup>7</sup>

Richard Davidson, one of the pioneers of contemplative neuroscience and an expert in the study of emotion, believes that people could be happier if they gained more control over their minds. According to Davidson, this in-

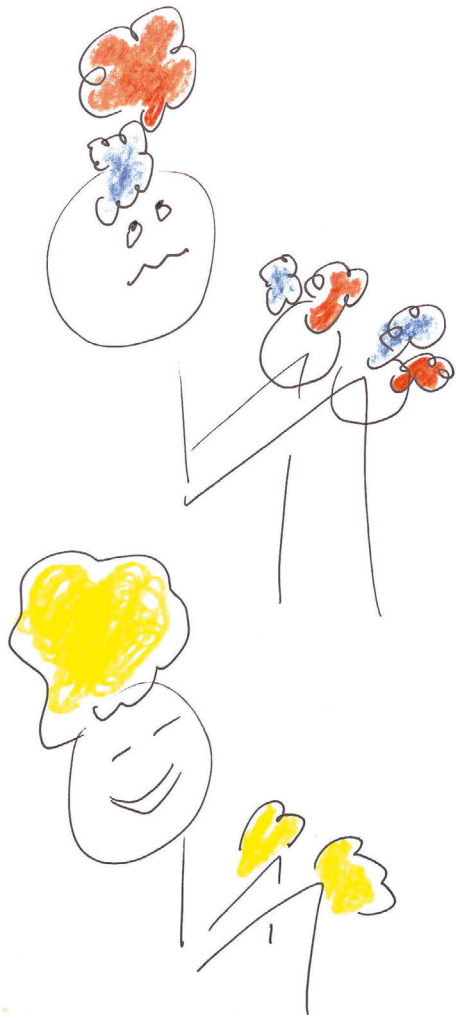
cludes taking more responsibility for one’s own psyche and gaining more insight into one’s own thoughts and feelings.<sup>8</sup> He points out that mindfulness and meditation practices can make a significant contribution here.

Davidson sees four basic prerequisites for a healthy mind, namely the basic recognition of *awareness*, the *connection to ourselves* and others, i.e. to have emotions such as compassion, kindness, gratitude and thus be able to relate to the environment, thirdly *insight into oneself* and fourthly to recognize one’s *purpose in life* and to orientate one’s behaviour accordingly.<sup>9</sup> Davidson also names four important building blocks for well-being: *Resilience*, *positive outlook on life*, *attention* and *generosity*.<sup>10</sup>

Davidson sees research into the mechanisms of mindfulness and meditation as an important step toward a better understanding of how to cultivate a healthy mind and live a content and fulfilled life.<sup>11</sup>

To Davidson, the question of what specific effects the practice of meditation has on the brain proves complex. First of all, this depends on the form of meditation, since different approaches usually produce different effects. Davidson also assumes that the effects of the respective meditation forms on the brain are not the same for everyone, since people are different, and therefore respond differently to the various approaches.<sup>12</sup>

Tania Singer – a neuroscientist, psychologist and the scientific director of the Social Neuroscience Research Group in Berlin – has come to the same conclusion. As the initiator and head of the Resource Project, the most comprehensive research project in this field to date, she points out that different mindfulness and meditation exercises produce different findings.<sup>13</sup> Singer notes the importance of examining these findings – including so-called zero findings in which no effects are observed – in a more differentiated way.<sup>14</sup> It’s important to also take the respective test subject’s constitution into account: “One shouldn’t simply say: in every person who meditates, the immune system is strengthened and aging is slowed down. [...] It also depends on how old or how sick you are.”<sup>15</sup>



Worry and negative thoughts also create physical effects; optimism and positive thoughts do as well.

The Resource Project was launched in 2011 and, in addition to attention-based mindfulness, aims to provide new knowledge related to compassion and ethics, as well as greater insight into emotion regulation, stress relief, and mental health.<sup>16</sup> Between June 2013 and November 2014, three-hundred test subjects participated in three training modules, each three months long.<sup>17</sup>

The modules focused on the following:

- a presence module: classical attention-based mindfulness exercises
- an affect module: qualities of the heart, but beyond self-care – also gratitude, acceptance, compassion for others and prosocial motivation
- a perspective module: cognitive, sociocognitive. Trains a the bird’s-eye view of thoughts, of one’s own personality components and of the thoughts and beliefs of others.<sup>18</sup>

In the participants of all three modules, initial evaluations have shown visible changes in the plasticity of neuronal networks. Due to extensive and complex data, which includes more than 90 measurement parameters (brain, chromosomes, behavior, etc.), the evaluation of this data continues.<sup>19</sup>

To Singer, it’s evident that different exercises produce different effects; she compares this with various types of sports that each have specific effects on the body. “But because the mind is hidden inside and not visible like muscles, it’s more difficult to understand the complexity and differentiation of our mental functions and to understand that you can cultivate, change and practice them in the same way as you cultivate, change and exercise certain muscle groups through sports.”<sup>20</sup>

As far as practice is concerned, there are still many unanswered questions. It’s unclear, for example, whether exercises should take longer, i.e. more than 20 minutes, or whether it is better to offer several short units, i.e. four times five minutes, in order to be effective. As yet, it’s assumed that there are no general answers here, but that it varies from person to person.<sup>21</sup>

When considering the effects of mindfulness and meditation techniques, another aspect to take into account is the significance of the order of the exercises, if several are practiced in succession. There’s also the question of consequences if exercises are omitted or added.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, it’s important to consider which type of exercise is appropriate for each situation (see Risks, p. 89 ff.).<sup>23</sup>

*This is the experience of everyone  
who starts to meditate [...],  
that these practices do much more,  
that they enrich your life in  
an inexplicable way and help you  
in things you didn’t know  
you needed help with before.*

Sara Lazar

## Further questions and Challenges

Peter Sedlmeier is a professor of Research Methodology and Evaluation, and the author of a book entitled *Die Kraft der Meditation: Was die Wissenschaft darüber weiß [the Power of Meditation: What Science Knows About It]*. Based on meta-analyses and meta-studies<sup>24</sup> as well as an analysis of peer reviewed research,<sup>25</sup> he sees the systematic effects of meditation on the brain as being clearly proven, but he is critical of the fact that many studies to date are not based on a well-founded theoretical framework, and are often only retrospectively examined to see which findings might possibly fit the model.<sup>26</sup> Sedlmeier points to an important problem confronting research: “What happens in the brain and what can be observed are not however thoughts or feelings, but physiological brain processes that are related to thoughts and feelings in a way that is still largely unexplained.”<sup>27</sup>

In the film *Free the Mind. Can one breath change your thinking?* by Phie Ambo, Richard Davidson reports on a study of meditation novices who meditated regularly over a period of two months. Afterwards, the participants were vaccinated against the flu. In comparison with a control group that also received a flu shot but had not meditated regularly for two months, the meditators were found to respond much better to the flu shot than the control group that had not meditated.<sup>28</sup> Despite these positive findings, Davidson admits that research has not yet discovered why this is ultimately the case. For him, a number of questions remain unanswered:

“Is it literally growing new neurons in specific areas that contribute to this? Is it the strengthening of new connections? Is it pruning connections that may have been causing a lot of noise and disruption and it is kind of like a sculptor who takes a block of marble and creates something beautiful by removing components not adding anything? We don’t know what the mechanism is. It could be any one of those mechanisms or it could be all of them.”<sup>29</sup>

Sara Lazar, neuroscientist in the psychiatric department of Massachusetts General Hospital and lecturer at Harvard University School of Medicine, also sees difficulties in interpreting changes in the GREY MATTER with regard to a precise attribution of causes: “Since we cannot distinguish between these different types of neural changes with the MRI, it is unclear whether the changes we observe in the brain are due to new connections, helper cells or blood vessels. We only know that there are differences in the grey matter.”<sup>30</sup>

The grey matter of the brain is the area of the brain where the nuclei of the nerve cells are located and where the neurons communicate with each other. According to Lazar, this is where “thinking”<sup>31</sup> takes place. The WHITE MATTER comprises the parts of the brain consisting of long fibers that connect the different brain regions with each other to ensure the exchange of information.<sup>32</sup>

## Meditation practices – the “deep” and the “wide” path

In comparing the various meditation practices, Davidson and Goleman have identified two different paths: first there’s the “deep path”, which can be divided into two levels, and second, the “wide path”, which consists of three levels.

The first level of the “deep path”, concerns meditation types in their purest form; they represent the most intensive types of practice (e.g. Theravada-Buddhism). The second level includes those forms that are close to the pure form, but don’t include certain non-transferable intercultural aspects.

On the “wide path”, the first level consists of meditation forms that represent a departure from from their original spiritual context and are well suited to the general public (e.g. MBSR). Some examples of second level approaches include special mindfulness and meditation apps for the smartphone, or short exercises practiced at

one’s desk. Apps are currently being developed for even lower-threshold practices, in order to reach more people – and especially the younger generation. These are assigned to the third level of the “wide path”.<sup>33</sup>

## Deep levels of meditation

Harald Piron, Ph.D., a psychologist and psychotherapist, postulates that a meditator’s experience of consciousness typically exists in relation to a depth dimension<sup>34</sup> that correlates to the accumulated previous experience of regular practice.<sup>35</sup>

He distinguishes five dimensions of depth: obstacles, relaxation and calming, the art of attentional control, essential qualities, and non-duality.<sup>36</sup>

Referencing Piron’s research on the ranges of meditation depth, the psychologist and neuroscientist, Ulrich Ott, Ph.D., has summarized the five depth ranges as follows:

- “Obstacles: restlessness, boredom, motivation/concentration problems
- Relaxation and calming: well-being, calm breathing, growing patience, calm
- The art of attention control (concentration): awareness, no clinging to thoughts, inner center, energy field, lightness, insights, equanimity, peace
- Essential qualities: clarity, alertness, love, devotion, connectedness, humility, grace, gratitude, self-acceptance
- Non-duality: stillness of thought, oneness, emptiness, boundlessness, transcendence of subject and object.”<sup>37</sup>

## Methods of measurement

Up to this point, Neuroscience in particular has played a leading role in mindfulness and meditation research. There are different scientific methods for this, depending on the effects to be measured. In his book *Meditation für Skeptiker. Ein Neurowissenschaftler erklärt den Weg zum Selbst [Meditation for Skeptics. A neuroscientist Explains the Way to the Self]*, Ott describes these as the measurement of electrical brain activity (EEG) and imaging techniques (i.e. MRI) that reveal where these effects take place in the brain.<sup>38</sup>

An EEG distinguishes between the following frequency ranges in the brain:

- Delta (0.1 to <4 Hz): dreamless deep sleep phase
- Theta (4 to <8 Hz): drowsiness, light sleep phases
- Alpha (8 to <13 Hz): slight relaxation or relaxed alertness with eyes closed
- Beta (13 to <30 Hz): different causes and meanings
- Gamma (from 30 Hz): during strong concentration, learning processes or meditation<sup>39</sup>

Summarizing the state of research to date, Sedlmeier observes changes especially in the theta and alpha range as a result of meditation.<sup>40</sup> He also points to an increase in gamma frequencies: “These effects can be interpreted as signs of increasing relaxation, which is however not (usually) accompanied by increasing drowsiness, but rather by increased attention and concentration.”<sup>41</sup>

Although EEG measurements provide valuable information, especially high temporal resolution, this method is not sufficient to determine exactly where changes occurring during mindfulness and meditation practices are located in the brain. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) offers a method that allows brain structures, brain functions and brain processes to be displayed and examined in three-dimensional images. The person being examined is placed in a large tube surrounded by a strong magnet; radio waves are used to cause the hydrogen nuclei in the tissue to align themselves briefly against the magnetic field; when they fold back into their original alignment, the absorbed energy is then emitted as a radio signal. This makes it possible to visualize the various changes in tissue and blood flow in the brain, for example when the person switches between tasks. Functional MRI images (fMRI) provide information about real-time changes in blood flow through the regions of the brain. Structural

MRI images show the amount of gray and white matter in the various regions of the brain.<sup>42</sup> A comparison between MRI images taken before a person had learned meditation and MRI images taken after only a few weeks of meditation practice reveals the changes in the brain caused by meditation.<sup>43</sup>

## Research results

An important result of mindfulness and meditation research as a whole is that mindfulness and meditation have demonstrable positive effects on our attitudes and behavior – and that this can in principle be achieved by anyone. As the monk and scientist Matthieu Ricard emphasizes in the film *The Altruism Revolution*: “My brain is absolutely not special and that comforts me. All this research would not be interesting if it was about studying extraordinary people like those who can hold their breath under water for 11 minutes. What fascinated me most about this research was the length of time people from the Himalayas, Tibet, Bhutan as well as the English, French, Americans, men and women, monks and nuns, lay people spend meditating. This is what makes the difference.”<sup>44</sup>

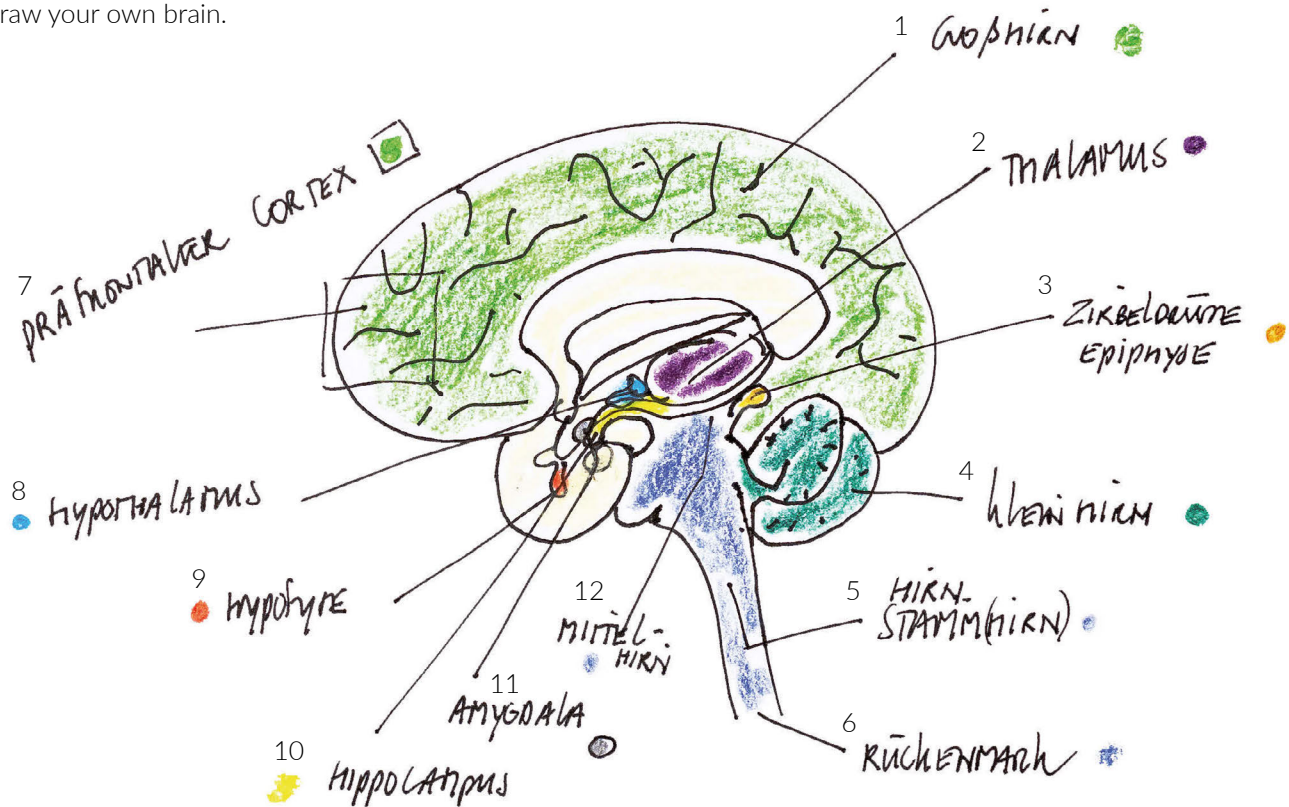
Apart from the fact that in principle mindfulness and meditation can have a positive effect on all people, it’s also remarkable how quickly one sees initial results. For example, Davidson points out that changes in the brain can already be seen in normal people who practice mindfulness and meditation exercises for 30 minutes a day for only two weeks.<sup>45</sup>

Sara Lazar’s research is dedicated to the question of how the practice of meditation affects the brain and how these changes can lead to lasting positive benefits. She defines behavior as an action of both the body and the mind. According to Lazar, behavior is related to brain activity, which in turn is related to the structure of the brain. She explains that in order for people to permanently change their behavior a corresponding restructuring of the brain structure is required.<sup>46</sup> Lazar describes the brain structure as “everything that has to do with the way neurons communicate with each other, from the number of connections between neurons to the amount of neurotransmitters that are released at the connection points (synapses)”<sup>47</sup>.

In her article, “Mechanismen der Achtsamkeit. Psychologisch-neurowissenschaftliche Perspektiven” [Mechanisms of Mindfulness. Psychological-neuroscientific Per-



Draw your own brain.



<sup>1</sup> cerebrum | <sup>2</sup> thalamus | <sup>3</sup> pineal gland | <sup>4</sup> cerebellum | <sup>5</sup> brainstem | <sup>6</sup> spinal cord | <sup>7</sup> prefrontal cortex | <sup>8</sup> hypothalamus | <sup>9</sup> hypophysis | <sup>10</sup> hippocampus | <sup>11</sup> amygdala | <sup>12</sup> midbrain

spectives], psychologist Britta Hölzel, Ph.D., – who has carried out research projects on “Mindfulness and Meditation” at Harvard Medical School in Boston, the Bender Institute of Neuroimaging in Giessen and the Charité in Berlin – identifies three different but interrelated areas in which the effects of mindfulness and meditation have so far been proven by scientific findings. Specifically, these are: the regulation of attention, the regulation of emotion, and self-awareness.<sup>48</sup>

Following in particular Richard Davidson, Britta Hölzel, Sara Lazar, and Ulrich Ott, a number of significant research findings are highlighted below.

- default mode network
- “attentional blink” effect
- vigilance, selective and executive attention
- body awareness
- the regulation of emotions
- compassion and altruism
- the dismantling of conditioning
- cell aging

In this context, the regions of the brain that are altered by the practice of mindfulness and meditation will also be examined.<sup>49</sup>

## Default mode network

Neuroscientific research has shown that some regions of the brain are more active when test subjects are not performing a task but are at rest. These resting active brain regions are collectively referred to as the DEFAULT MODE network; “This [...] includes regions of the MEDIAL PREFRONTAL CORTEX, the POSTERIOR CINGULATE CORTEX and the PRECUNEUS (regions located on the mid-plane of the brain), as well as the HIPPOCAMPUS located in the TEMPORAL LOBES and also the TEMPOROPARIETAL JUNCTION.”<sup>50</sup> According to Ott, the activity of the default mode network points to, among other things, so-called MIND-WANDERING, the digression of thoughts: “Whenever we are faced with a situation not requiring us to react or which only calls for routine actions, mental



*The earth would be a different place  
if we spent the same amount of time  
on caring for our mind as we do  
on brushing our teeth.*

Richard Davidson

resources are made available and these can then be used to remember, to reflect, to plan.”<sup>51</sup> Hölzel also sees the function of the default-mode network as an opportunity to reflect on experiences: “Wenn wir uns also überlegen, welche Relevanz bestimmte Ereignisse für uns selbst haben, oder wenn wir uns selbst in einem anderen räumlichen oder zeitlichen Kontext vorstellen – uns also in die Zukunft versetzen oder uns an Vergangenes erinnern –, dann werden diese Vorgänge vom Default- Mode-Netzwerk ermöglicht.”<sup>52</sup>

As the whole psyche is involved in mind wandering, it's not merely thoughts that are activated, but also feelings. In the case of stressful thoughts and feelings, these have a negative effect on our mental hygiene. An active default mode network also results in reduced attention on the present action and indicates that one is therefore not really present in the moment. The researchers Matthew A. Killingsworth and Daniel T. Gilbert point out that people often find it difficult to be fully aware of what they are doing. In their study “A Wandering Mind Is an Unhappy Mind”, they found that on average,<sup>47</sup> percent of the people surveyed were not mentally present in the moment.<sup>53</sup> Davidson emphasizes that it's both possible and important to reduce this attention deficit; in his opinion, mindfulness and meditation exercises in particular can contribute to this. By merely observing and not evaluating, one learns not to pursue emerging thoughts about the past and future. A conscious presence in the here and now also ensures a reduction in the occurrence of thoughts.<sup>54</sup>

Research has shown that the activity of the default mode network is altered in meditators. From this, researchers conclude that people who practice mindfulness and meditation are generally less distracted by thoughts and are also less preoccupied with themselves. In this context, Hölzel points to a change of meditators' SELF EXPERIENCE:

“We identify less rigidly with ourselves and the things in our lives – with our possessions, our appearance, but also with thoughts, feelings, our personality, habits and idiosyncrasies. Whereas before there was a firm identification with a personality, there is now a feeling that as human beings we are all connected with each other – with a greater whole.”<sup>55</sup> Through the role of observer and non-attachment as well as a stronger connection with one's own being, there is the TRUST and SERENITY to encounter the world. Research has demonstrated that meditation has positive effects on, among other things, SELF PERCEPTION, SELF APPRECIATION, and SELF EFFICACY, as well as on SELF IMAGE in general.<sup>56</sup>

### Blinking of attention (“Attentional Blink effect”)

The ATTENTIONAL BLINKING EFFECT, also known as “Attentional Blinking”<sup>57</sup>, can be used to test for potential changes in the area of attention. It refers to the phenomenon whereby, during the processing of a specific stimulus, no additional stimuli is able to be processed. This short-term “blind spot” (attention deficit) in perception ensures that we miss a subsequent stimulus if it occurs too quickly following the first stimulus or if the first stimulus demands too much attention.<sup>58</sup> Studies show that meditation practice leads to more efficient processing of the first stimulus, so that the brain is ready in time to grasp the subsequent stimulus.<sup>59</sup>

An increased recognition rate would, for example, also be very valuable in the perception of facial expressions.<sup>60</sup> It's especially fleeting facial expressions, the so-called *micro-expressions*, that say a great deal about people because they show feelings in a completely uncensored way. Though these are not easy to perceive, one can learn this with training. In a study of experienced meditators, the recognition rate of emotional expressions was found to be comparatively better than that of test persons without meditation experience.<sup>61</sup>

## Vigilance, selective and executive attention

Hölzel identifies changes in three areas of attention due to mindfulness and meditation practices: VIGILANCE, SELECTIVE ATTENTION and EXECUTIVE ATTENTION.

Vigilance, a long-lasting attention, “refers to the willingness to respond appropriately to rare stimuli in monotonous and long-lasting situations.”<sup>62</sup> Selective attention “refers to the selection of specific information from a variety of information. It is the selection of the object or thought process to which the attention is directed.”<sup>63</sup>

Executive attention “refers to the monitoring and resolution of conflicts of attention through distracting stimuli. This means consciously turning to a stimulus, even if it means that other things must be ignored.”<sup>64</sup>

According to Hölzel, studies show that selective and executive attention can be quickly improved by mindfulness and meditation exercises, whereas a positive effect on vigilance requires long practical experience.<sup>65</sup> She refers to the so-called ANTERIOR CINGULAR CORTEX (ACC) as a brain region that is clearly involved in regulating executive attention. Here, studies have shown changes in both the GREY MATTER (thicker cortex) and the WHITE MATTER (increased integrity of connecting fibers) as effects of mindfulness and meditation.<sup>66</sup>

## Body awareness

Awareness of our body enables us to recognize sensations in the body. Mindfulness and insight meditation techniques use these sensations as an object of focus and strengthen the connection between body and mind. An important exercise in this regard is the body scan (see p. 135 ff.). Studies show that such techniques lead to a change in the anterior INSULAR CORTEX of the RIGHT HEMISPHERE of the brain. Lazar points in this regard to an increase in the density of the GREY MATTER.<sup>67</sup>

Emotional regulation means: not being the pawn of your own emotions and being able to observe them from outside oneself. We are not our emotions!

According to Ott, this region of the brain makes it possible to create a so-called “METAREPRESENTATION of the PERCEIVED BODY”<sup>68</sup>, since here a great deal of information from inside the body comes together. In addition to body sensations, it’s where individual emotional states are registered.<sup>69</sup> An improved awareness of one’s body also has a positive effect on our thinking and on the decisions we make.<sup>70</sup> Increased awareness of our own emotional world us to put ourselves in the shoes of others. Hölzel points out that the practice of mindfulness and meditation has a positive influence not only on EMPATHY, but also on AFFECT REGULATION, in particular registering and appropriately reacting to one’s own feelings.<sup>71</sup>



## Emotion regulation

To be aware of our emotions, yet not controlled by them, allows us more room to maneuver and to react appropriately in specific situations. Research has shown that the practice of mindfulness and meditation has a positive effect on the REGULATION of EMOTION. It has also been shown that these reduce the frequency and intensity of negative emotions and amplify positive emotional states.<sup>72</sup>

Citing the reasons for this shift towards positive emotional states, Hölzel explains that mindfulness and meditation exercises make it easier to reinterpret emotional situations – what’s referred to as REAPPRAISAL. The acceptance of a situation, and the withholding of judgement, what’s termed NON-APPRAISAL, also leads one to less identify with destructive emotions. In addition, mindfulness and meditation generally improve the capacity to resolve CONDITIONING. This also supports the modulation of emotional reactions.<sup>73</sup>

As the PREFRONTAL CORTEX controls attention, it also is vital to the control of emotions.<sup>74</sup> Among other things, it has a regulating effect on limbic regions such as the AMYGDALA. This area in the brain is activated when we are confronted with fear-inducing stimuli.<sup>75</sup> One part of the amygdala is important for recognizing signs of danger. Once these are recognized, another part of the amygdala then triggers a cascade of reactions. According to Davidson, this cascade consists of three central components: “One is the behavioral component, which may be associated with freezing or with running away, with fleeing. It could include the second component, that is the second component, which will involve changes for example in heart rate and blood pressure to prepare the organism to act. And the third component is changes in hormones. And the key hormone here is CORTISOL, which is a stress hormone.”<sup>76</sup>

Studies have shown that the practice of mindfulness and meditation leads to a reduction in the activity of the amygdala.<sup>77</sup> This also affects the HIPPOCAMPUS – a part of the brain important for the regulation of emotions and, which among other activities, ensures that one is able to react to situations in an emotionally appropriate manner. If the activity of the hippocampus is weakened, we find our ability to control this much more difficult.<sup>78</sup> The cells in the hippocampus are damaged by cortisol. If the cortisol level is elevated for a longer period of time in the case of prolonged stress, this has a damaging effect on the hippocampus and its functions. A decrease in gray

matter is visible in this area of the brain. Studies have shown that mindfulness and meditation reduce stress and thus, among other things, the activity of the amygdala. The decrease in cortisol levels has a positive effect on the hippocampus and is reflected, among other things, in an increase in gray matter in this area.<sup>79</sup>

## Compassion and Altruism

If meditation techniques are combined with the practice of empathy and compassion – generally referred to as metta meditation forms or meditations of loving kindness – the intensification of compassion and altruistic behavior is an observable effect.<sup>80</sup> In the book *Caring Economics*, by Tania Singer and Matthieu Ricard, several authors report on the innate nature of compassion and why we should encourage this ability, instead of individualism and competition.<sup>81</sup> In their book *The Emotional Life of Your Brain* Davidson and Begley write on how the structure of the brain determines our emotions, and how we can influence them. This is noted in research in which participants, after training in metta meditation, were observed to make much more altruistically-influenced decisions in risk simulation games than they had before such training.<sup>82</sup>

An increase in the number of connections between the affected brain regions generally leads to an improvement in empathy and social intuition.<sup>83</sup> In the film *Free the Mind*, Davidson points out that after only three months of practicing compassion meditation, participants were able to perceive their surroundings more subtly and to better judge other people.<sup>84</sup>

Previous studies have shown that people basically have an inherent BASIC INNER GOODNESS.<sup>85</sup> In order to promote this capacity in children between the ages of four and seven years, Davidson’s Center for Healthy Minds has developed a mindfulness-based Kindness Curriculum for the core curriculum.<sup>86</sup> The exercises teach children, for example, “how to be connected and friendly towards themselves and the people around them.”<sup>87</sup> Since the brain has a high degree of neuroplasticity at this age, Davidson’s team is focusing on this area; it’s precisely during this phase that the brain undergoes extensive restructuring and interventions can have a considerable impact.<sup>88</sup>

## Conditioning reduction

The practice of mindfulness teaches us to be more in the here and now, to consciously perceive the respective moment and to approach it with curiosity. It's also about observing first instead of immediately judging situations or impulsively reacting to the respective sensory stimuli.<sup>89</sup> This attitude automatically leads to an open, unbiased basic attitude in life and to more serenity and acceptance. Forms of mindfulness and insight meditation also make it possible to re-examine and, if desired, to change AUTOMATIC PATTERNS OF ACCEPTANCE, THINKING and BEHAVIOUR. Situations can be constructively reinterpreted and thus avoidance strategies can be reduced. Meditations of deep contemplation, which are aimed at a comprehensive inner silence, even lead to a general lessening of CONDITIONING (see "Mindfulness and Meditation in the Educational System – a Paradigm Shift?", p. 20).

The ventromedial prefrontal cortex, the amygdala and the hippocampus are particularly important for the reduction of conditioning and the relearning of emotional responses. As mentioned above, these brain regions can be positively altered through mindfulness and meditation practice.<sup>90</sup>

## Cell aging

EPIGENETICS, a field of biology that deals with the mechanisms of gene regulation and its inheritance, has recently also begun to study the effects of mindfulness and meditation interventions on our chromosomes.

The length of the TELOMERES, the protective caps of our chromosomes, is reduced during cell division. If the cell continues to divide, at some point the cells have no more protection and therefore die.<sup>91</sup>

Elizabeth Blackburn, a molecular biologist and Nobel Laureate in Physiology/Medicine, has shown that stress accelerates this shortening process. Conversely, a reduction in stress, but also merely a constructive approach to stress, has the potential to counteract such degeneration. Initial studies have shown that mindfulness and meditation exercises increase the concentration of TELOMERASE, an enzyme responsible for the production of telomeres. This regenerates the telomeres and slows down the processes of degeneration.<sup>92</sup> It has not yet

been determined how long the increase in telomerase values lasts. It is hoped that further studies will provide more information about this.

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- <sup>1</sup> See Langer 1989, among others.
- <sup>2</sup> See "Mindfulness Journal Publications by Year, 1980-2015", in: American Mindfulness Research Association (2016): [goAMRA.org](http://goAMRA.org). See also Sedlmeier 2016, p. 59 f.; Hölzel / Brähler 2015, p. 9; Ott 2015, p. 167 f.
- <sup>3</sup> Muktananda 1999, p. xx.
- <sup>4</sup> Morel 2016, 17:51 min.
- <sup>5</sup> Further information: [www.mindandlife.org](http://www.mindandlife.org); see also Goleman 2004, p. xiii ff. and the film Dalai Lama – Scientist (2019) by Dawn Gifford Engle.
- <sup>6</sup> Cf. Kabat-Zinn 2013, p. 219 f.
- <sup>7</sup> Kabat-Zinn 2013, p. 219.
- <sup>8</sup> With regard to taking responsibility for our mind, see also Singer / Ricard 2017, p. 177 ff.; as well as Gilman / Lestrade 2016, 51:55-52:22 min.
- <sup>9</sup> Cf. Davidson 2018, p. 61; see also Davidson's TED lecture (2019b) "How mindfulness changes the emotional life of our brains", [www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CBfCW67xT8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CBfCW67xT8) (accessed September 13, 2020); and lecture and panel discussion "We can change the brain, by changing the mind" on March 19, 2019a, Professor Richard Davidson in Munich at the Forum für den Wandel of the Edith-Haberland-Wagner Foundation, [www.ehw-stiftung.de](http://www.ehw-stiftung.de) (accessed September 13, 2020).
- <sup>10</sup> Richard Davidson Lecture (2016) "The Four Constituents of Well-Being", [www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeBpsIFQITI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeBpsIFQITI) (accessed September 13, 2020).
- <sup>11</sup> The Center for Healthy Minds, founded by Richard Davidson, conducts a great deal of research in this area. Further information: [www.centerhealthyminds.org](http://www.centerhealthyminds.org) (accessed September 13, 2020).
- <sup>12</sup> Cf. Davidson 2018, p. 58; see Ott 2015, p. 167.
- <sup>13</sup> Cf. Singer 2019a, p. 60 f.
- <sup>14</sup> Cf. Singer 2019a, p. 64.
- <sup>15</sup> Singer 2019a, p. 64 [Author's translation].
- <sup>16</sup> Cf. Singer 2018, p. 63 ff.
- <sup>17</sup> The Free E-Book *Mitgeföhl. In Alltag und Forschung* by Tania Singer and Matthias Bolz describes training programs, the current state of science and reports on practical experience: [www.compassion-training.org/?lang=de](http://www.compassion-training.org/?lang=de).
- <sup>18</sup> Cf. Singer 2019a, p. 58 ff.; see also Singer 2018, p. 63 ff.
- <sup>19</sup> Cf. Singer 2019a, p. 63 f.
- <sup>20</sup> Singer 2019a, p. 63 [Author's translation].
- <sup>21</sup> Cf. Davidson / Goleman 2017, p. 276.
- <sup>22</sup> Cf. Sedlmeier 2016, p. 168 f.
- <sup>23</sup> Cf. Sedlmeier 2016, p. 169 f.; see also Singer 2019a, p. 61 f.
- <sup>24</sup> Cf. Sedlmeier 2016, pp. 74 ff.
- <sup>25</sup> Cf. Sedlmeier 2016, p. 80 ff.
- <sup>26</sup> Cf. Sedlmeier 2016, p. 172.
- <sup>27</sup> Sedlmeier 2016, p. 103 [Author's translation].
- <sup>28</sup> Cf. Ambo 2013, 1.04:10–1.04:43 Min.
- <sup>29</sup> Ambo 2013, 1.04:44–1.05:22 min.
- <sup>30</sup> Lazar 2015, p. 79 [Author's translation]; see also Hölzel 2015, p. 70.
- <sup>31</sup> Lazar 2015, p. 74 [Author's translation].
- <sup>32</sup> Cf. Lazar 2015, p. 74.
- <sup>33</sup> Cf. Davidson / Goleman 2017, p. 3 ff.
- <sup>34</sup> Cf. Piron 2020, p. 27 ff.
- <sup>35</sup> Cf. Piron 2020, p. 29.
- <sup>36</sup> Cf. Piron 2020, p. 27 ff.
- <sup>37</sup> Ott 2015, p. 17 [Author's translation].
- <sup>38</sup> Cf. Ott 2015, p. 173.
- <sup>39</sup> Cf. Ott 2015, p. 169 f.; see also Sedlmeier 2016, p. 104 ff. and Singer / Ricard 2008, p. 67 ff. and p. 116 f.
- <sup>40</sup> Cf. Sedlmeier 2016, p. 109; see also Ott 2015, p. 170.
- <sup>41</sup> Sedlmeier 2016, p. 109 [Author's translation].
- <sup>42</sup> Cf. Lazar 2015, p. 73.
- <sup>43</sup> For a description of the two methods see Ott 2015, p. 167 ff.; see also Sedlmeier 2016, p. 104 ff.
- <sup>44</sup> Gilman / Lestrade 2016, 49:12-49:52 min.
- <sup>45</sup> Cf. Gilman / Lestrade 2016, 50:12-50:24 min.
- <sup>46</sup> Cf. Lazar 2015, p. 71 f.; see also Lazar, Sara (2011). "How Meditation Can Reshape Our Brains: Sara Lazar at TEDxCambridge", [www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8rRzTrP7Tc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8rRzTrP7Tc), 0:13-8:33 min. (accessed September 13, 2020).
- <sup>47</sup> Lazar 2015, p. 72 [Author's translation].
- <sup>48</sup> Cf. Hölzel 2015, p. 43 f.
- <sup>49</sup> In the book *The Neuroscience of Mindfulness Meditation. How the Body and Mind Work Together to Change Our Behavior* by Yi-Yuan Tang, the neuroscientific findings as well as the specific brain regions affected are explained. Also included is a glossary with an explanation of many brain regions, see Tang 2017, p. 11 ff. For an overview of which brain changes caused by mindfulness and meditation exercises have thus far been scientifically proven, see also Ott 2015, p. 178 f.
- <sup>50</sup> Hölzel 2015, S. 68 [Author's translation]; see Buckner / Andrews-Hanna / Schacter (2008) as well as Siegel 2018, 135 ff.
- <sup>51</sup> Ott 2015, p. 98 f. [Author's translation].
- <sup>52</sup> Hölzel 2015, p. 68 [Author's translation].
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- <sup>54</sup> Cf. Ott 2015, p. 98 ff.
- <sup>55</sup> Hölzel 2015, p. 60 [Author's translation].
- <sup>56</sup> Cf. Hölzel 2015, p. 43 f. and p. 67.
- <sup>57</sup> In the case of Singer / Ricard 2008, p. 66: "Blinzeln der Aufmerksamkeit" [*Blinking of Attention*], Author's translation].
- <sup>58</sup> Cf. Slagter / Lutz / Greischar / Francis / Nieuwenhuis / Davis / Davidson 2007; see also Singer / Ricard 2008, p. 66 ff. and Hölzel 2015.
- <sup>59</sup> Cf. Slagter / Lutz / Greischar / Francis / Nieuwenhuis / Davis / Davidson 2007; Singer / Ricard 2008, p. 66 ff.; see also Hölzel 2015, p. 49 f. and Ott 2015, p. 102.
- <sup>60</sup> On the perception of facial expressions, see the lecture "The Universality of Emotion" by Paul Ekman, Professor of Psychology and Director of the Human Interaction Laboratory at the Medical School of the University of California at Goleman 2004, p. 119 ff.
- <sup>61</sup> Cf. Singer / Ricard 2008, p. 73 f.
- <sup>62</sup> Hölzel 2015, p. 47 f. [Author's translation].
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- <sup>64</sup> Hölzel 2015, p. 47 [Author's translation].
- <sup>65</sup> Cf. Hölzel 2015, p. 47 f.
- <sup>66</sup> Cf. Hölzel 2015, p. 48 f.
- <sup>67</sup> Cf. Lazar 2015, p. 75 f.; see also Hölzel 2015, p. 62 f. and Ott 2015, p. 65.
- <sup>68</sup> Ott 2015, p. 47 [Author's translation].
- <sup>69</sup> Cf. Ott 2015, p. 65.
- <sup>70</sup> Cf. Ott 2015, p. 65 ff.; see also Sedlmeier 2016, p. 66 f.
- <sup>71</sup> Cf. Hölzel 2015, p. 63 f.
- <sup>72</sup> Cf. Hölzel 2015, p. 50.
- <sup>73</sup> Cf. Hölzel 2015, p. 52.



<sup>74</sup> Cf. Ambo 2013, 1.03:28-1.04:10 min.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Hölzel 2015, p. 53; see also Lazar 2015, p. 74; Ott 2015, p. 70 ff. and p. 180.

<sup>76</sup> Ambo 2013, 37:54-38:41 min.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. also the contribution in Bayern 2 by the moderator Birgit Magiera "Achtsamkeitsforschung – Frieden für die Welt oder Wellness fürs Ich?" (Mindfulness research – peace for the world or wellness for the self?) on 5 March, 2020, <https://www.br.de/mediathek/podcast/iq-wissenschaft-und-forschung/achtsamkeitsforschung-frieden-fuer-die-welt-oder-wellness-fuers-ich/1793281>

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Ambo 2013, 37:22-37:54 min.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Hölzel 2015, p. 58 f.; see also Lazar 2015, p. 77 f. and Ott 2015, p. 71 f. and p. 178.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Ambo 2013, 12:25-14:15 min; see also Ricard 2016.

<sup>81</sup> See Singer / Ricard 2015.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Davidson / Begley 2013, p. 222 f.; see Sedlmeier 2016, p. 67 f.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Davidson / Begley 2013, p. 224.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Ambo 2013, 12:25-14:15 min.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Gilman / Lestrade 2016; see also Ricard 2018a, p. 224 ff. and lecture and panel discussion "We can change the brain, by changing the mind" on March 19, 2019a, Professor Richard Davidson in Munich at the Forum für den Wandel of the Edith-Haberland-Wagner Foundation, [www.ehw-stiftung.de](http://www.ehw-stiftung.de) (accessed September 13, 2020).

<sup>86</sup> Center for Healthy Minds (2017). Kindness Curriculum. <https://centerhealthyminds.org/science/studies/kindness-curriculum-study-with-pre-kindergarten-students> (accessed September 13, 2020).

<sup>87</sup> Davidson 2019c, p. 50 [Author's translation].

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Davidson 2019c, p. 50; see also Gilman / Lestrade 2016, 52:25-56:08 min.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Kabat-Zinn 2013, p. 19 ff.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Hölzel 2015, p. 58 f.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Kabat-Zinn 2013, p. 220 f.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Blackburn / Epel 2018, p. 12 and p. 153 ff.; see also Kabat-Zinn 2013, p. 220 f. and Davidson / Goleman 2017, p. 177.



# STRUCTURE



# The Munich Model

## “Mindfulness and Meditation in a University Context”<sup>1</sup>

This chapter will review the Munich Model’s various course offerings, its development and implementation as well as the program’s results to date. Conditions of participation, performance criteria and the teaching content of the “Mindfulness and Meditation” courses will also be covered. In particular, the model’s regular courses have gained recognition nationally and internationally, as such courses are rarely ever offered at universities as integral to the curriculum including grading and ECTS<sup>2</sup>.

### Regular “Mindfulness and Meditation” Courses

In the summer semester of 2010, I offered to teach a summer term, for-credit course called “Mindfulness and Meditation” in the department of Applied Social Sciences at the Munich University of Applied Sciences. It was my first offering of such a course, with space for up to 15 participants from the Social Work degree program. Sixty-five students applied. This marked the beginning of a program now titled, the Munich Model. This course, offered as part of “Creative Methods/1st semester” which ended in mid-July 2010 had 14 participants, who requested for the course to continue the following semester. The number of participants was sufficient to offer a new course. In addition, the course had a waitlist of 50 students.

Unfortunately, it wasn’t possible to add another course to the curriculum for the 2nd semester on such short notice. Instead it was decided that an additional course on the subject of “Meditation” be given in the 2010/11 winter semester, during the main study period. Compared to the course offered in the 1st semester, this course, entitled “Meditation II” in the main subject area “Creative Methods/ Deepening/5th semester” dealt with practical exercises, but above all with a larger range of research topics as well as field practice in the context of social work,

whereby mindfulness and meditation are already practically applied. In the 2011/12 winter semester, the first course was held at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU) Munich<sup>3</sup> under the title “Meditation at Primary School” as part of the “Elementary School Pedagogics” degree program.

The following semester, summer 2012, the course “Meditation at School” took place in the “Teacher Education” degree program. Both courses were also open to students of the “Pedagogics for Special Needs Education” degree program. In the 2013/14 winter semester, a further course was offered at the Munich University of Applied Sciences, in the Faculty of General and Interdisciplinary Studies under the title of the “Personal Competence” degree program, initially under the title “Stress Management and Stress Prevention”<sup>4</sup>. At this faculty, so-called elective courses are offered and can be taken by students of any faculty. From the very beginning, the student response was huge. Well over 100 students applied for 15 places. An additional course offering, in English, followed in the 2014 summer semester. As awareness of the two courses grew, the number of applicants also increased; after a few semesters, there were already over 700 applicants for the 15 places in each course.

In the summer semester of 2014, a course in “Meditation” was established for the 2nd semester of the part-time “Social Work” degree program. This course was also offered in the dual study “Nursing” program, in the “Practice in Body Perception” study program. During the 2014/15 winter semester, the course “Teaching classical music holistically” was added to the curriculum of the “Music Education” degree program in the Faculty of Arts (LMU) Munich. The course focuses on a technique based entirely on music meditation. In the context of the Munich Model, this course is part of a more specific theme: “Meditation and Art”.

In the 2015/16 winter semester, followed “Mindfulness and Meditation” in the “Early Childhood Education” degree program, under “Methods of Stress Management”. This was an important addition to the already



existing repertoire of mindfulness and meditation courses concerned with pedagogy. As this field of study relates to children from 0-12 years of age, students working with pre-school aged children could now participate in the Munich Model.

In the 2017/18 winter semester, an advanced course, “Meditation III” was inaugurated and offered during the main study period of the “Social Work” degree course. A course called “Stress management and Meditation”, which is held in English, supplemented the course offering of the Faculty of General and Interdisciplinary Studies.

During that same semester, at the Munich University of Applied Sciences, further teaching modules were integrated into the “Meditation and Art” theme. This time, the subject was “Paintings of the Great Masters”<sup>5</sup>, offered to students in the both the “Social Work” as well as the “Early Childhood Education” degree programs. Starting in the 2018 summer semester, a second course was added under “Courses in English” specifically for international students of the Munich University of Applied Sciences, to present them the opportunity to learn about the “Meditation and Art” approach.

The course program has continually expanded in the time period between the 2010 summer semester and the 2020 summer semester, with more than 150 students taking part in the programme each semester. Thus far, students from the following faculties and degree programs have participated in the courses:

## Munich University of Applied Sciences

### Faculty of Applied Social Sciences

- BA Social Work
- BA Social Work Part Time
- BA Early Childhood Education
- BA Care

### Faculty for General and Interdisciplinary Studies

- Faculty of Architecture
- Faculty of Civil Engineering
- Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Automotive Engineering, Aircraft Engineering
- Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Information Technology
- Faculty of Supply and Building Services Engineering, Process Engineering Paper and Packaging, Printing and Media Technology

- Faculty of Applied Natural Sciences and Mechatronics
- Faculty of Computer Science and Mathematics
- Faculty of Geoinformatics
- Faculty of Industrial Engineering and Management
- Faculty of Business Administration
- Faculty of Applied Social Sciences
- Faculty of Design
- Faculty of Tourism

## Ludwig-Maximilians-University (LMU) Munich

### Faculty of Psychology and Education

- Teacher training for primary school pedagogy and didactics
- Teacher training for school pedagogy
- Teacher training for special education

Details for the various courses on offer are noted on the Munich model website: [www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell](http://www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell). Also listed for each of the courses are the semester hours per week, the corresponding ECTS credits, the course semester, the number of applicants and participants, the subject specification, the start of implementation and the proof of performance.

## Conditions of participation

A prerequisite for participation in most of the Munich Model’s courses and additional meditation offerings is a stable mental condition. Previous experience with meditation, stress management or relaxation techniques is not required. However, the “Meditation II” and “Meditation III” courses offered in the “Social Work” degree program do require prior experience with mindfulness and/or meditation. This is met by the successful completion of the basic “Meditation I” course, or on the basis of successful completion of an external meditation class. Students can register for nearly all the meditation courses online. The Munich Model’s website ([www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell](http://www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell)) indicates how many students have already applied for the available seats in each course, and how many of them have received a seat.

## Course contents, proof of performance and grading

In the practical part of the courses students learn different mindfulness and meditation exercises. The theoretical building blocks of the course consists of research studies, background knowledge about the different approaches of meditation and the possible ways of implementing mindfulness and meditation in the students’ later professional occupations.

## Schedule

As a rule, the course units last two semester hours per week (SWS), i.e. a total of 90 minutes (2 x 45 minutes). We begin with a sitting meditation, which includes, for example, focusing on the breath, on the area between the eyebrows or the inner recitation of a mantra (word, verse or syllable). In the beginning of the semester this exercise lasts only a few minutes. It expands over the semester until it becomes about 15-20 minutes. We then have a short feedback round: the students tell more about their experiences during the meditation. What went well and what were the challenges?

As the course continues, each lecture deals with a specific topic relevant to the course and degree program and includes practical exercises and theoretical input. Every lecture ends with a short sitting meditation. I use a singing bowl to guide the practical exercises: striking it one time reminds the students to return to focusing on their awareness, in the case their mind is wandering; three times indicates the end of the exercise.

The “Social Work” degree program course is three semester hours weekly. Because of this, the participants are offered a on-day daylong mindfulness block course, which includes eating and cooking mindfully, in addition to theoretical content.

## Teaching contents

The following teaching content was imparted through the courses. For a detailed description of the practical exercises listed below, see p. 83 ff. and p. 101 ff.

## Practical exercises (a selection)

- Mindfulness and breathing exercises
- Mantra meditation
- Mindful cooking/eating
- Mindful communication
- Body scan
- Loving kindness/metta meditation
- walking meditation
- Sutras
- Sound meditation

## Theoretical building blocks

- Research on mindfulness and meditation (especially neuroscience)
- Fields of implementation for mindfulness and meditation (specific to every degree program)
- Background knowledge on various approaches to mindfulness and meditation (for example: Vipassana, MBSR, Christian Meditation, Zen Meditation, Transcendental Meditation, Transmission Meditation etc.)
- Spiritual teachers and their teachings

## Other topics (selection)

- Thoughts and emotions
- Health and stress
- Happiness
- Religion and spirituality
- Time (past, present/current, future)

## Films (selection)

- Monks in the Laboratory
- The Altruism Revolution
- Free the Mind
- The Dhamma Brothers
- InnSaei – the power of intuition
- In Pursuit of Silence

For further examples of topics and films, see the section “Additional Offerings (Lecture and Film Programme)” (p. 62 and p. 74 f.).

For further literature references related to the various teaching content: [www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell](http://www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell) (section “Literature and Films”).

## Acquisition of skills

The main objectives stated in the curricula:

- Promoting self-awareness
- Becoming aware of your own thought activities
- Increased concentration and attention
- Strengthening of self-confidence, self-efficacy, well-being and regulation of emotion
- Constructive stress management
- Promotion of creativity and intuition

The effects of the course units are discussed in the “Results to date” section (p. 64 ff.).

## Proof of performance and grading

Students are graded on the basis of attendance in the course, regular participation, the writing of a personal meditation journal and a written reflection about possible and meaningful ways of implementing mindfulness and meditation in their future professional field. The students are also invited to practice the presented exercises at home. They write down their experiences in their meditation journal. The composition of the entry includes:

- What: which exercise
- When: day/time
- Where: at home, in the park, on the train, at the bus stop etc.
- Other: potential additional materials (for example timer/cell phone app, seat cushion)
- Length of time: flexible
- Personal well-being before/after the exercise

The main aim of the journals is to give the participants more insight into their own meditation practice: When and where do I meditate well? What time of day is best for me and why? Which exercise is suitable when? It is not necessary to do every exercise at home exactly as many times as the other exercises. Usually certain exercises

emerge that become favorites as they generate a higher state of well-being. Likewise it's not necessary to repeat an exercise many times. It's important not to overstretch the practice time; too much of a good thing is not necessarily always productive. For example sitting meditation should be 15 to 20 minutes, once or twice a day.

Towards the middle of the semester, all meditation journals are submitted. I then go through them and have the opportunity to check on how the students felt about the exercises, to ensure they are doing them correctly and at times, to be able to share general feedback in upcoming lectures that the journals may generate. All information in these meditation journals is of course strictly confidential. After the exercises are introduced in class, the students have enough practice and knowledge to practice at home. As there are meditation forms that should only be practiced over a longer period of time under the guidance of an experienced teacher, it is recommended that students who prefer these forms contact reputable meditation schools.

In the “Early Childhood Education” course program, a 20-minute oral examination is held in addition to the above-mentioned performance assessment. The first part of the oral examination consists of a short presentation of a practical example that students have worked out themselves, e.g. how mindfulness can be practiced with children in day-care centres. In the second part, the topics of general mindfulness and, in particular, mindfulness and meditation research are examined.

## Additional offerings within the framework of the Munich Model

Five key supplemental components have thus far also been anchored in the Munich Model:

- Additional course offerings for students
- Additional course offerings for university employees
- Additional course offerings for teaching staff
- Network meetings
- A public lecture and film program

For up-to-date information on these additional courses: [www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell](http://www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell) (section “Courses”).

### Additional offers for students

#### Seminars and workshops

In addition to the regular courses at the LMU Munich, both a four-hour, and an eight-hour workshop, entitled “Mindfulness and Meditation at School” have been offered since the 2013/14 winter semester, at the Munich Center for Teacher Education (MZL) at the LMU Munich. From the 2015/16 winter semester and in the succeeding winter semesters up to and including 2018/19, a three-hour workshop “Meditation and Mindfulness in Counselling” was offered at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences. This collaboration will continue in the 2020/21 winter semester with new offerings.

#### Meditation project for alumni

Since the 2016/17 winter semester there has been an ongoing meditation class for alumni of the Munich University of Applied Sciences, LMU Munich, TU Munich, Academy of Fine Arts Munich and the University of Music and Performing Arts Munich. No previous knowledge of meditation is required for participation, but a stable mental condition is a prerequisite. The meditation is offered on Tuesdays from 5:15 to 6:15 p.m.. A short introduction takes place in advance at 5:00 p.m. The venue is the “Room of Silence” at the Munich University of Applied Sciences.

### Event “Calm for the exam – relaxation techniques before exam situations”

In cooperation with the student advisory service of the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences, workshops for reducing exam anxiety have been held since the 2019 summer semester.

#### Coaching seminars and coaching retreats

From the 2020 summer semester onwards, coaching seminars and coaching retreats will be offered every semester for both current and former students who are conducting mindfulness and meditation projects as part of their studies or in their professional fields.

#### Participation in “The Toolbox is You” retreats

Former students are also able to participate in “The Toolbox is You” retreats under the direction of the mindfulness trainer and craniosacral bodywork practitioner, Maria Kluge at the Achtsamkeitszentrum Osterloh ([www.achtsamkeit-osterloh.org](http://www.achtsamkeit-osterloh.org)).

#### Additional offerings for university employees

When staff members of the university discovered that there were meditation classes for students, they expressed the wish for something similar to be made available for university employees. The first such class, a mindfulness trial lesson was offered during the 2012 summer semester, as part of Health Day at the Munich University of Applied Sciences. Afterwards, the 15 participants asked whether there could also be a weekly course – whereupon 10 classes were offered. The structure of the classes at that time was: 20 minutes of meditation, 30 minutes of deepening a topic and then another 10 minutes of meditation. After the course, 14 participants continued this course weekly, on Friday’s from 7:30–8:30 a.m., for two years. Afterwards the class was changed to Thursdays 8.00–8.30 a.m. and continued by the university staff themselves. A similar course is planned for the Pasing campus from the summer semester 2020.

## Additional courses for teaching staff

In the 2017/18 winter semester, workshops for teachers, on the topic of “Mindfulness and Meditation in Teaching” were also introduced as part of the program. In addition to theory and exercises, these workshops focus more on research on mindfulness and meditation as well as possible applications to their respective classes. The emphasis is on practice, so that the teachers are able to have their own experience and then authentically convey what they have learned. While a long and profound experience of meditation is needed to teach meditation techniques, especially those of inner contemplation, not much previous experience is required for a series of simple but already effective mindfulness exercises (see p. 87 and p. 169 f.). This is what makes short applications in regular classes so promising. Feedback from instructors shows that the overall atmosphere of the classroom changes, and in particular becomes more relaxed. In addition to teaching content, students are now also provided tools that affect self-awareness.

In the 2019/20 winter semester, a partnership was established with the DiZ – Center of Teaching and Learning in Ingolstadt (Bavaria) to include seminars on “Mindfulness and Meditation in a University Context” in the DiZ course program. The first two-day seminars will take place during the 2020 summer semester and will continue to be offered every semester should there be a positive response. The establishment of a working group is also planned in this case.

## Network meetings

Network meetings have been held under the Munich Model since the 2017 summer semester. These are primarily intended for current students and former students who have participated in the meditation courses of the Munich Model. Those who are active in the field of education and are interested in the topic can also participate, by invitation.

The focus of the meetings is to facilitate an exchange for the sharing of experience from independently conducted mindfulness and meditation projects (for example in the context of internships and final theses) and about new findings in mindfulness and meditation research. The meetings last a maximum of two hours and are structured as follows: 20 minutes of meditation together, 30 minutes

of presentation on current developments (including “News from Science”, short project presentation(s), literature tips/ internet links). Afterwards there’s a discussion. The meetings take place several times per semester. The dates are announced on [www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell](http://www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell).

## Lecture and film programme

Since the 2014/15 winter semester, lecture and film evenings on the topic of “Spiritual Teachers and Their Teachings” have been held within the framework of the Munich Model. Originally, the idea was to give the students another opportunity, outside of class, to learn more about different meditation approaches, backgrounds, spiritual teachers and also about developments in neuroscience. Due to considerable interest, a free public event series has developed out of this.

On [www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell](http://www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell) the events and main topics of the program are announced; the current program flyer is available as a PDF download. For an overview of the topics covered so far, see “Lecture and Film Series – Spiritual Teachers and Their Teachings” (p. 74 f.).

## Infrastructure

### Rooms

Most of the courses at Munich University of Applied Sciences take place in the rooms of the Catholic and Evangelical University Community in Paaso. Courses for the in the Faculty of General and Interdisciplinary Studies are held at a different location, in the “Room of Silence” of the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Information Technology. At LMU Munich, practical exercises are offered at the Catholic University Community (KHG) and the theoretical components of the courses take place in the regular classrooms at LMU Munich.

Workshops on the subject of “Calm for the exam” are held in classrooms at Munich University of Applied Sciences. So far, the additional courses for university employees has taken place in the “Room of Silence” of the Faculty of Electrical Engineering. Additional offers for teaching staff are mainly carried out in the DiZ – Center of Teaching and Learning.

Network meetings are offered in the Paoso or the KHG. The public film and lecture series takes place in the “Red Cube” lecture hall of the Faculty of Computer Science and Mathematics at the Munich University of Applied Sciences. Some events have also taken place at the Faculty of Design.

## Materials

Pillows, mats, blankets and suitable cabinets for storage were purchased for the program’s meditation classes. These materials were initially furnished out of tuition fees, still charged at that time. When tuition fees were abolished, these materials were furnished through additional funds. For this, the necessary applications were submitted.<sup>6</sup>

## Expert literature and films

As part of the Munich Model, an extensive range of books and films is available through the the Munich University of Applied Sciences’ library at the Pasing Campus. These can also be borrowed in other branches of the university and by other universities throughout Germany. In addition, there is an extensive collection of reference books in the Campus Pasing library. As well as the regular library codes, all books and films have an extra code, namely the abbreviation “MZ”, which stands for “Meditation Center”. Using this coding, all works on the subject of “Mindfulness and Meditation” that are available at the University of Applied Sciences Munich can be accessed on the website of the University Library via the field “Free Search”. Under the heading “limit hits” you can also select the various forms of publication, such as printed material or video (DVD).

The assortment now consists of over 700 book titles on the subject of “Mindfulness and Meditation” as well as numerous audiovisual media (CDs and DVDs). Several copies of most titles are available. There are even 35 copies of the books that serve as primary literature in some courses. These can be borrowed by the respective course participants on a per-semester basis.

A small inventory of books on the subject of “Mindfulness and Meditation” has also been assembled for the LMU Munich. However, these books are registered normally in the library (branch pedagogy/psychology) and

are not directly related to the Munich Model. On the website page: [www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell](http://www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell), detailed literature recommendations are available as PDF downloads in the “Literature and Films” section. Interestingly, it has so far been shown that in addition to students from the Munich University of Applied Sciences and LMU Munich, students from other universities in Germany have also taken notice of the range of books and films available, and order these from the Munich Model via interlibrary loan.

## Cooperation partners

In addition to the partnerships with Paoso and the KHG, which have existed since the 2010/11 winter semester, there have been numerous other collaborations established, in particular with universities, but also with some institutions that offer specific meditation courses. Some of the cooperation partners are described in the section “Results to date”; others are listed at [www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell](http://www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell).

## Program Announcements

The courses are listed in the online course catalogue of the respective faculty. The in the Faculty of General and Interdisciplinary Studies also has a printed course catalogue in which the “Stress Management und Meditation” courses are listed. Information about these courses is also provided in a flyer from the “Health Promoting University” program, which also lists additional meditation courses for students.

The public and free lectures and film screenings are announced via event calendars on the websites of the Munich University of Applied Sciences and LMU Munich, as well as on flyers and posters. There is also a distribution list with the contact addresses of those interested. All events can also be found on [www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell](http://www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell).



## Results to date

### Student Feedback

In March 2016, a student, Isabel Braunger, interviewed the participants of the 2015/16 winter semester meditation courses as part of her studies in Integrative Health Promotion under the direction of Professor Niko Kohls, Coburg University of Applied Sciences and Arts.<sup>7</sup> The pilot study, which was carried out using an online questionnaire, shows, among other things, significant differences between those participants who already have meditation experience compared to “newcomers”. The more stressed a person felt, the less mindful and self-effective he/she experienced themselves to be. The more mindful a person felt, the more self-efficacy they experienced. The study also asked, among other things, what the participating students thought about the following statement: “Meditation in a university context is a meaningful and profitable enrichment for students and should therefore be offered more often”. Of the surveyed students, 86.1 percent answered with: “I fully agree”.

Further feedback about the meditation courses also comes from students featured in the film *Shanti – Meditation in a University Context Using the Example of the Munich Model* by Katharina Nowack, Ramona Wegele and David Kutschi (p. 186 ff.). These students from the “Social Work” degree course produced the film as part of their final thesis, coming to all courses with their cameras over one semester.

From my own observations throughout the numerous courses since the 2010 summer semester, as well as through the reading of approximately 2000 meditation journals, each 25–40 pages long, it is clear that the courses offered help students to cope better with the hectic pace of today’s world, with uncertain future prospects, the general pressure to perform and the at times heavy workload of their studies. It can also be seen from the reports and feedback discussions in the classroom that the exercises of loving kindness and the compassion meditations lead to a better interpersonal understanding and more serenity. (See also the journal notes on loving kindness, p. 147 ff. as well as on reflections, p. 177 ff.)

As a further result, it is noteworthy that more than 75 final theses have already been written on the topic of “Mindfulness and Meditation”, among others on the application and implementation of one’s own mindfulness and meditation projects. As these were written in the con-

text of varying fields of study, many different areas of application and professional fields have been explored. Over the last few semesters, the number of students wishing to write their final thesis on these topics has risen continuously. Consequently, this can be expected to continue into the immediate future. For a selection of papers submitted so far see section “Theses within the Framework of the Munich Model” (p. 69 ff.). All final theses are listed on [www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell](http://www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell) (“Final Theses” section).

Last but not least, an important result is that several former students have already become lecturers themselves since completing their studies and have begun to take over the teaching of courses under the Munich Model. See: [www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell](http://www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell) (section “Program”).

### Cooperation

In the meantime, a dynamic network has been established in cooperation with a number of partner organizations. First and foremost, this includes Paoso and the KHG, who make their rooms available for mindfulness and meditation course offerings (see “Infrastructure” section p. 62 f.).

#### Universities

Below is a list of some of the Munich Model’s cooperative partners. For an overview of all cooperative partnerships, including contact details see:

[www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell](http://www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell).

Since 2016 there has been a close cooperation with Anna Caspersen, MSc., and Maaïke Rijken, MSc., of the Faculty of Social Work and Law at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. Within the framework of the ERASMUS programme, every year the Munich Model is introduced to the students of the Positive Psychology program. Lectures include the topics of mindfulness and meditation research, techniques and applications. As a result of this partnership, each year, two students from Munich University of Applied Sciences are also invited to take part in and benefit from this course.

Since 2015, a fruitful cooperation has been established with Professor Niko Kohls, of the Coburg University of Applied Sciences, particularly in relation to the exchange of current findings on mindfulness and meditation research and the joint supervision of theses.

In May 2015, a partnership developed with Susanne Krämer, Ph.D., from the Centre for Teacher Training and

School Research at the University Leipzig, on the occasion of a guest lecture: “Possibilities for training the mind: Meditation in a university context? – The Munich Model”. This is also when the name “Munich Model” was first coined.

In the same month, at the invitation of Daniel Holt, Ph.D., the Munich Model was presented at the faculties of Psychology and Medicine at the University Heidelberg. Since then, the first course units have taken place there.

Since 2016 an extensive exchange has been underway with the Ernst Abbe University of Applied Sciences Jena and the Friedrich Schiller University Jena. Under the direction of Professor Mike Sandbothe and Reyk Albrecht, Ph.D., these two universities – together with four other Thuringian universities, the Thuringian Ministry of Science and the German health insurance company AOK PLUS – have designed and evaluated the Thuringian model “Mindful Universities”. University teaching staff from several German states are currently involved in the further worldwide transfer of this first fully developed curricula set for the implementation of mindfulness training in the in a university context. The different courses developed in Jena for university students, lecturers, employees and managers have seen more than 10,000 participants between 2015 and 2019. In this context, a certified training called “Mindful University Teachers” has also been established. In addition, nearly 400 university members from Germany, Austria and Switzerland are already participating in the supraregional cooperation platform Mindful Universities, <https://achtsamehochschulen.de>, developed as part of the Thuringian model.

The platform explores the effectiveness of mindfulness and meditation in a changing, digitized university landscape. The aim is to clarify how target group-specific mindfulness trainings can improve the ability to deal with disruptive transformation processes (such as digitalization, globalization, corona and climate crises) in a prudent, sustainable and socially balanced way and strengthen the motivation to promote resilience in personality development at universities. At the European level, the cooperation platform is active in the Erasmus + training program, Embodied Critical Thinking (2020-2023). More information can be found at: <https://www.trainingect.com/>.<sup>8</sup>

The Munich Model was also presented in 2016 at the University of Applied Sciences in Vienna (FH Campus Wien); and in the same year, a fruitful collaboration was initiated with Santino Güntert and Silke Vlecken, Ph.D. of the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW).

In October 2016, a productive exchange began with Reiner Frey, Ph.D. of the Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences. One year later, in 2017, the first mindfulness and meditation offerings were implemented here, together with Professor Gerd Döben-Henisch. With powerful support from the president Professor Frank E. P. Dievernich, the “Meditation and the Future of Education” congress was held in 2018. The following year another congress was held under the title “Meditation and the Future of Education 2019: Spirituality and Science”. The contents of the lectures and workshops were published in book form for both events.<sup>9</sup> In January 2020, the Scientific Center for Personality Development and Social Responsibility (ZPG) was founded at Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences. It comprises three working areas, namely personality formation (through meditation and self-reflection), social responsibility (including social learning) and university didactics. These three pillars are to be incorporated into the curricula as an integrated whole and form the basis for research activities.

At Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences, the Executive Board has also signalled their support for the implementation of a mindfulness and meditation program. On the initiative of the President Professor Andreas Bertram, a full-time position, “Mindful Leadership” (staffing: Christiane Leiste), was created in advance to develop, implement and coordinate such course offerings. The partnership with Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences began in 2018 with an exchange meeting in Munich. Shortly thereafter, Christiane Leiste spent several days in Munich to observe the Munich Model’s courses. In autumn of the same year, a public guest lecture and various workshops with students and university staff were held in Osnabrück. In the meantime, a comprehensive program on the topic of “Mindfulness and Meditation” has been implemented at the Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences. This includes a series of mindfulness training courses for students and teachers, as well as a certificate course entitled “Mindful University Teachers”, which has already taken place in Jena. Further information is available at: [www.hs-osnabrueck.de/de/mindful-leadership/](http://www.hs-osnabrueck.de/de/mindful-leadership/)

Since 2018 there has also been a cooperative partnership Nils Altner, Ph.D., from the University of Duisburg-Essen. In addition to an exchange on research and the application of mindfulness and meditation approaches in day-care centers and schools, a joint publication on the topic of “Mindfulness at Primary School” was also produced.

With Ulrich Ott, Ph.D. at the Bender Institute of Neuroimaging of the Justus-Liebig-University Gießen, there is also a collaboration taking place in the context of research questions, particularly in the supervision of students writing their theses.

In 2018, a collaboration with Karlheinz Vaitl, Ph.D. from the Centre for Teacher Education at the University of Vienna was also established.

In cooperation with the universities of Leipzig and Tübingen the “(Research) Network Mindfulness in Education” has been initiated. This is an exchange platform for universities, schools and other educational institutions. The focus is on how mindfulness can be integrated into the respective professional fields. An overview of the projects in the German-speaking countries is available on the website [www.netzwerk-achtsamkeit-in-der-bildung.de](http://www.netzwerk-achtsamkeit-in-der-bildung.de) offers. The contact persons are located at the Universities of Leipzig and Tübingen.

Initial partnerships at the Universities of Bayreuth, Würzburg, Tübingen, St. Gallen and Constance, were arranged through student initiatives.

#### **MBSR MBCT Verband [German association of MBSR and MBCT teachers]**

There is a fruitful collaboration with the chairman of the MBSR-MBCT association, Günter Hudsch, particularly in the exchange of current findings on mindfulness and meditation research and the application of mindfulness and meditation in different professional fields.

#### **Training organizations**

At the DiZ – Center of Teaching and Learning in Ingolstadt (Bavaria), two-day seminars on the topic of “Mindfulness and Meditation” will begin in the 2020 summer semester. If the response is positive, the aim is to offer this course regularly every semester and to establish a working group.

In cooperation with the Pedagogical Institute in Munich, one-day seminars for educators and teachers are being offered. A first seminar on “Mindfulness for teachers” was held at the Academy for Teacher Training and Personnel Management in Dillingen (Bavaria).

In the Achtsamkeitszentrum in Osterloh former students can take part in the “Toolbox is You” retreats.

#### **Schools and day care centers**

In Munich and the surrounding area, there are numerous partnerships with schools and daycare centers. As part of their studies Students carry out such mindfulness projects here. In addition, many students continue to work with mindfulness and meditation after they have completed their studies, for example in their professional fields, through schools and day care centers.

#### **Open child and youth work**

After a first contact with the Munich County Youth Council in the 2019/20 winter semester, a practical workshop on the application of mindfulness and meditation approaches in open child and youth work is planned for the 2020 summer semester. Subsequently, corresponding seminars for the regular training program are planned.

#### **Spiritual groups, associations and information centres**

Through the lecture and film series “Spiritual Teachers and Their Teachings”, which takes place within the framework of the Munich Model, partnerships have developed with a variety of spiritual groups, associations and information centers, such as those of Thich Nhat Hanh, Krishnamurti, Mother Meera and Sri Chinmoy. For further information and links see [www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell](http://www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell) (under the heading “More Links”).

#### **Lectures and Workshops**

As a result of numerous guest lectures and workshops at universities as well as at conferences and congresses at home and abroad, the idea of the Munich Model has gained recognition both nationally and internationally. These presentations were intended for a variety of target groups, including social workers, youth workers, educators, teachers, university lecturers/lecturers, mindfulness trainers, medical doctors, artists, managers in companies and judges. In this context, the lectures and workshops listed below are particularly worth noting:

- In June 2017, the Munich model was presented at the World Forum for Ethics in Business in the panel area “Continuing Education for Ethics in Innovations” under the title “Possibilities of Training the Mind: Meditation at University? The Munich Model”, which also discussed the importance of promoting intuition in a university context.

- In November 2017, at the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum’s “Museum Guides Now!” International symposium, the new approach “Meditation and Art” was presented using a workshop and guest lectures. In the same month, following a lecture in London at the international World Goodwill Seminar “From the Unreal to the Real. Discerning Truth in Our Times” the lecture: “The Revelation of Meaning: Meditation and Higher Education”. Through the parallel transmission to two other locations, Geneva and New York, as well as on the Internet, an international audience was informed about the Munich model.
- In March 2018, there was an international workshop and lecture “Possibilities of training the mind: Meditation at university? – The Munich Model” as part of the symposium “Studenten hebbend dorst”. Immediately afterwards, two lectures on the Munich model at international conferences on mindfulness and meditation in Bern and Vienna, with Richard Davidson as the keynote speaker in neuroscience and a pioneer in mindfulness and meditation research.
- Lecture: “The Munich Model brings Mindfulness and Meditation to University Students” at the international conference “The Future of Education – Edition 8” in Florence in June 2018. Lecture in October 2018: “From intellect to intuition. Meditation in a University Context – the Munich model” and workshop “Practice Box – Meditation and Intuition” at the Frankfurt congress “Meditation and the Future of Education”.
- At the invitation of students of the Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes – German Academic Scholarship Foundation –, the lecture and workshop “From Intellect to Intuition: Mindfulness and Meditation in a University Context – the Munich Model” took place in April 2019 at the event “Meditation from A to Zen – Theoretical Perspectives on a Contemplative Method”.
- Lecture: “Meditation and Art – The Conscious Perception of the Great Works of Painting” at the international conference “The 9th Edition of The Future of Education” in Florence in June 2019.

For all lectures, workshops and seminars see [www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell](http://www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell) (category “Events”).

## Press Response

The Munich model has already attracted a great deal of press coverage. For all media coverage see [www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell](http://www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell) (under “Press”; as download or link).

## SOURCES

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- Dievernich, Frank, E. P. / Döben-Henisch, Gerd-Dietrich / Frey, Reiner (2019). *Bildung 5.0: Wissenschaft, Hochschulen und Meditation. Das Selbstprojekt*. Weinheim / Basel: Beltz Juventa.
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## Magazines

- de Bruin, Andreas (2019b). “Meditation and Art – Große Werke der Malerei bewusst wahrnehmen”, in: *Zeitschrift für Bewusstseinswissenschaften. Transpersonale Psychologie und Psychotherapie*, 25. Jahrgang 1. Petersberg: Verlag Via Nova, p. 10-20.
- de Bruin, Andreas (2017). “Möglichkeiten der Geistes-schulung: Meditation im universitären Kontext? – Das Münchener-Modell”, in: *Zeitschrift für Bewusstseinswissenschaften. Transpersonale Psychologie und Psychotherapie*, 23. Jahrgang 2. Petersberg: Verlag Via Nova, p. 68-84.

### Internet

Kutsch, David / Nowack, Katharina / Wegele, Ramona (2017). *Meditation at University. A film about the Munich Model*. [www.sw.hm.edu/die\\_fakultaet/personen/professoren/bruin/muenchner\\_modell/film.de.html](http://www.sw.hm.edu/die_fakultaet/personen/professoren/bruin/muenchner_modell/film.de.html) (accessed September 13, 2020)

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<sup>1</sup> The text is partly taken from: de Bruin 2017 and de Bruin 2019a.

<sup>2</sup> European Credit Transfer System: expressed in terms of credit points.

<sup>3</sup> Further in the text: LMU Munich.

<sup>4</sup> "Meditation" was included as a term in the title because the event dealt almost exclusively with mindfulness and meditation topics.

<sup>5</sup> For a description of the "Meditation and Art" approach see de Bruin 2019b.

<sup>6</sup> We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to Advisory Committee of the Munich University of Applied Sciences, as they have financially supported the Munich model from the start.

<sup>7</sup> For details on the survey and other results to date in the context of the Munich model, see Braunger 2016.

<sup>8</sup> For an overview of developments to date, see: Sandbothe, Mike / Albrecht, Reyk (Eds.) (2021). *Achtsame Hochschulen in der digitalen Gesellschaft*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

<sup>9</sup> Dievernich / Döben-Henisch / Frey (2019) and Frey (Eds.) (2020).





# Theses within the Framework of the Munich Model

For a selection of theses submitted so far, see the following summary.

All other theses are listed on [www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell](http://www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell) (“Final Theses” section).

There was no supervision of final theses in the winter semester 2019/20 due to a research semester.

## Bachelor Theses – University of Applied Sciences (Selection)

- |                                |                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Böker, A. A.</b><br>(2019)  | Mindfulness in Kindergarten. Theoretical and Practical Considerations Using the Example of the Project Group “The Mindful Eagle Gang”.      |
| <b>Held, A. M.</b><br>(2019)   | Mindfulness in Childcare Facilities to Strengthen Personal Resilience Factors.                                                              |
| <b>Nöprick, L.</b><br>(2019)   | Trauma-sensitive Yoga in Social Work – Opportunities and Risks.                                                                             |
| <b>Kühl, B.</b><br>(2019)      | Mindfulness with children in primary school.                                                                                                |
| <b>Strobl, I.</b><br>(2018)    | Mindfulness in kindergarten – chances, risks and ways of implementation.                                                                    |
| <b>Emberger, F.</b><br>(2018)  | “Learning Emotion” – Fostering emotional competencies with mindfulness and meditation in school social work.                                |
| <b>Ernst, A.</b><br>(2018)     | Introducing meditation and mindfulness to people suffering from psychological trauma – Limits and opportunities.                            |
| <b>Linner, M.</b><br>(2018)    | Mindfulness in day care centres for children – chances, risks and ways of implementation.                                                   |
| <b>Völker, H.</b><br>(2018)    | Experiencing interventions of meditation and mindfulness during pregnancy and the effects on prenatal stress. A qualitative research study. |
| <b>Skiebe, K.</b><br>(2018)    | The concept of mindfulness during processes of counselling in social work.                                                                  |
| <b>Lexhaller, C.</b><br>(2018) | Mindfulness in primary school for preventing and managing stress.                                                                           |



- Kutschi, D.** Meditation at University.  
**Nowack, K.** A film about the Munich Model.  
**Wegele, R.**  
 (2017)
- Stoßberger, A. M.** Mindfulness and meditation with youth using the example of the youth club Cosimapark of the Kreisjugendring Munich-City.  
 (2017)
- Fischbacher, M.** Mindfulness in the field of care for persons with disabilities. A project with mentally disabled and learning-disabled young women.  
 (2017)
- Steer, A. L.** Mindfulness and meditation with children and teenagers using the example of the Mittelschule Augsburg Herrenbach.  
 (2017)
- Wahlandt, P.** Mindfulness and meditation as a method of prevention and treatment of burnout.  
 (2017)
- Grimm, S.** Effects of meditation and mindfulness exercises on the well-being of children.  
 (2017)
- Maier, J.** “I am freaking out!” Chances and different ways – How can we implement mindfulness for children and youth displaying behavioural problem?  
 (2017)
- Hofmann, N.** Mindfulness with children and teenagers in the context of youth work using the example of the cooperation project between the youth club “Come in” and the Support Centre for children with special needs Weilheim.  
 (2017)
- Gut, L. V.** Social work and stress. Mindfulness meditation as a way to reduce stress.  
 (2017)
- Keppeler, C.** Mediation as a way to develop own health competencies using the example of nurses working in the impatient care.  
 (2017)
- Dukas, M.** Meditation and mindfulness in emergency department. A concept for nurses.  
 (2017)
- Schuster, M.** Methods of relaxation and mindfulness as a way of educational intervention for children displaying behavioural problems.  
 (2017)
- Käfer, M.** Mindfulness in remedial day care centres for children – Theoretical and conceptual thoughts for the daily routine of groups.  
 (2017)
- Maier, M.** Mindfulness with accompanied refugee children – Theoretical approaches and ways of implementation using the example of the communal accomodation for refugees of AGDW e.V. Stuttgart-Hofen.  
 (2017)

- Lemppenau, M. Schmelzer, A.**  
(2016) Mindfulness for primary-school pupils – A project for learning stress management.
- Zenker, A.**  
(2016) Meditation and Social Work. A way to strengthen professional behaviour?
- Uhl, A.**  
(2016) The relevance of meditation for children and youth in Social Work.
- Schimon, A.**  
(2016) “Who wants to be a great explorer? Let’s move!” Yoga for children as a health-promoting activity in kindergarten.
- Schröck, R.**  
(2016) Progressive muscle relaxation after Jacobson (PMR) – A preventive offer to foster the relaxation of children aged 6-10 years.
- Htagkonikou, D.**  
(2016) Religion as part of the human existence and its relevance for Social Work.
- Jaster, I.**  
(2016) Can mindfulness mediation help to deal with stress-induced health problems?
- Hornung, J.**  
(2015) Meditation as aesthetic medium in Social Work using the example of Transcendental Meditation (TM).
- Penning, N.**  
(2015) The effects of martial art in Social Work using the example of the Korean martial art Tang Soo Do.
- Maierbacher, R.**  
(2015) Mediation in Social Psychiatry.
- Beck, H.**  
(2014) Mindfulness meditation as aesthetic medium in Hospice Work. A project in the Johannes-Hospiz of the Barmherzige Brüder in Munich
- Gäbler, M.**  
(2014) Daoistic care of life as potential resource in Social Work.
- Jiwa, J.**  
(2013) Mediation as aesthetic medium using the example of treating chronic pain.
- Nachbar, B. V.**  
(2013) Yoga for children – One aspect of health education in primary school. Effects and ways of implementation.
- Hick, N.**  
(2012) Yoga for children as a health-promoting activity in Social Work.
- Hobbit, M.**  
(2012) Quality of life and health with the help of mediation.

## Master theses (selection)

- Gut, L. V.**  
(2019, Thesis not finished yet) Mindfulness and Meditation in a University setting – Opportunities, Limits and Implementation Options. A Qualitative Survey of University Teachers.

## Theses for the qualification and authorization to teach at a school – Lehramt LMU (Selection)

- Wittmann, D.**  
(2017) Meditation and mindfulness with children using the example of a study with pupils at a primary school.
- Friedrich, A.**  
(2017) Christian mediation in context of school
- Koster, K.**  
(2016) Can meditation practices support children to have a better stress management in their daily school routine and at home?
- Markwardt, S.**  
(2016) Vipassana-meditation after S. Goenka – Introduction and reflections about the implementation at school.
- Holz auf der Heide, E.**  
(2016) Meditation at primary school – Effects of mindfulness exercises on children displaying exam anxiety.
- Schaule, C. M.**  
(2016) Mindfulness in School Psychology: Relevance and ways of implementation
- Tschernov, M.**  
(2016) Yoga with children as an offer in aesthetic education.
- Czajka, L.**  
(2015) Effects of mindfulness on persons displaying behavioural problems in prisons
- Brzakovic, J.**  
(2015) Mindfulness at school – Model of the five phases
- Henkel, J. S.**  
(2015) How can Social Buddhism support learning at school? A project of a transition class in Munich.
- Hofbauer, C.**  
(2014) Meditation at school. Meditative elements as an important part of senior classes at grammar school.
- Reinecke, J.**  
(2014) Mindfulness for children with displaying behavioural problems. Opportunities and limits for the implementation in a primary school.
- Reckerzügl, M.**  
(2013) An educational concept of mindfulness – Changing the world with an open mind and body awareness.

## Doctoral theses / Ph.D. (LMU Munich)

**Stauss, J. F.**  
(2019, Thesis not finished yet)

Mindfulness and professionalizing teachers. Developing a systematic mindfulness concept for teacher training. Supervision: Professor C. Hansen (University of Passau), Professor A. de Bruin (Munich University of Applied Sciences).

**Schramm, A.**  
(2019, Thesis not finished yet)

MAMAS (Meditation and mindfulness at school). Effects on attention and well-being of students and on the atmosphere in the class. A quantitative and qualitative research study. Supervision: Professor E. Kiel (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU) Munich), Professor A. de Bruin (Munich University of Applied Sciences).



# Events in the Lecture and Film Series “Spiritual Teachers and Their Teachings”

Program flyers from the lecture and film series are available as PDF downloads at [www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell](http://www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell). The flyers also contain brief descriptions of the respective event topics. In the summer semester 2015 as well as in the winter semester 2019/20 no events took place due to a research semester.

*Thursday | 7 pm*

July 11, 2019	The silent revolution – An inward path to change
June 6, 2019	From Business to Being
May 23, 2019	In Pursuit of Silence
April 11, 2019	Speed – In Search of Lost Time
January 31, 2019	Athos
December 13, 2018	Meditation and Art – The Conscious Perception of the Great Works of Painting (Workshop)
November 22, 2018	Mind and Life – early dialogues
October 11, 2018	Buddha’s Journey – A Journey to the Holy Sites of Nepal and India
June 7, 2018	Nisargadatta Maharaj – I Am That
July 12, 2018	Mutter Meera – Darshan in Silence
April 19, 2018	School of Mindfulness
March 22, 2018	Shanti – Teaching Meditation at university through the Munich Model
January 18, 2018	Walk With Me – A Journey into Mindfulness
July 6, 2017	Blueprints for Awakening: Wisdom of the Masters
May 18, 2017	InnSaei – The Power of Intuition
April 20, 2017	My Reincarnation. A Father. A Son. A Destiny
March 30, 2017	Mind and Life – early dialogues
January 26, 2017	Aurora is rising or The rising of Dawn – Hommage à Jacob Böhme

January 12, 2017	Into Great Silence
December 8, 2016	Musicosophia – listening to classical music (Workshop)
November 24, 2016	The Altruism Revolution
October 13, 2016 10	Questions for the Dalai Lama
July 7, 2016	Breath of the Gods
June 23, 2016	Awake – The Life of Yogananda
May 12, 2016	Meditation at University – The Munich Model
April 14, 2016	Eric Kandel – In Search of Memory
January 28, 2016	Maitreya and the Masters of Wisdom
January 14, 2016	Sathya Sai Baba: Talks to Westerners
December 10, 2015	Mata Amritanandamayi – Amma: Darshan – The Embrace
November 26, 2015	The Dhamma Brothers Meditation in a high security prison
October 29, 2015	Free the Mind Can you rewire the brain just by taking a breath?
<i>Tuesday   7 pm</i>	
January 27, 2015	Krishnamurti: The Challenge of Change
January 13, 2015	Sri Chinmoy Challenging Impossibility (excerpts)
December 16, 2014	Benjamin Creme The Teachings of Maitreya – Discovering the Self / The State of the World
December 2, 2014	Helena Petrovna Blavatsky – Alice A. Bailey The Ageless Wisdom Teachings
November 25, 2014	Francisco Varela Monte Grande – What is Life?
November 11, 2014	Dalai Lama – Renaissance
October 28, 2014	Thich Nhat Hanh – Going Home





EXERCISES  
AND NOTES  
FROM  
STUDENT  
JOURNALS

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# About Teaching

Before explaining the exercises practiced within the framework of the Munich Model, this section will deal with approaches to teaching. First, I'll shed light on my previous teaching experience with unemployed youth, as this had a lasting effect on my further teaching activities.

## First teaching experience

In November 1996, I took up a three-day lecturing job at a vocational preparation course – which apart from my training in college – was my first experience teaching adolescents. The group consisted of 15 unemployed youths, some with a high school diploma, some without. Some of them had already been “kicked out” of school several times, and for these students, the vocational training program offered a last chance.

The program served to orient participants to the job market and was intended to support them in finding work internships and potentially being hired by one of the participating companies. It was one of many approaches undertaken by the federal government to get youth unemployment under control.

Over the next three days, I had planned to teach these students the function of their own perception (day 1), their own thinking (day 2) and, linked to this, their behavior (day 3). On day 3, I would spend the afternoon covering the topic of “job interviews” and I actually believed that by the end of my teaching assignment, I would be able to present “model-ready” applicants! As a compass, I had planned the concept down to the last minute.

However, it all turned out quite differently! My concept proved to be useless and within a very short time, I had to throw it all out. On the first day it was necessary to end the lessons early. Several times I'd had to dismiss a number of students due to their unruly behavior, and gradually, the group became very small. To my surprise, they were more interested in provoking me or doing their own things than in accepting my well-meant “offer of help”.

It was only upon returning home in the evening that I realized I had to do things completely differently; that I really didn't know anything about these students; and that I'd only been focused on my own ideas about how the lessons should go.

I also realized that it was possible to interpret the provocations differently, rather than as attacks on my personality. It was very likely that these students had already had numerous negative experiences with teachers. Apparently they wanted to test me and decide for themselves whether they would eventually accept me as a teacher.

The next day I came to class, without any plans – so to speak, and asked only what they wanted to do. Some thought we should make a film. “But no shots to practice job interviews or anything, something about gangsters, that would be cool!” The others in the group agreed. I was so grateful that they wanted to participate at all, so almost anything would have been fine with me. We started right away and began first writing a script. At some point we had a storyline and assigned roles. We got the necessary video camera from the educational institute. I knew little about camera technology, but two

participants were experts. We managed to get some shots the same day! The rest we shot on day 3. It was the perfect chaos and it caused me a great deal of stress! Being completely inexperienced in both teaching and dealing with young people, I had to not only “carry” the film project itself, but also keep an eye on these students.

At the end of three days of teaching, instead of having applicants suited to the job market to present, I only had a video cassette with several film sequences on it. If one were charitable, among these could be found the thread of a “gangster story”.

“Hey Andy, when are you coming back?” is a question I’ll never forget. My thought at that moment was: “My God, never again!”, and I suddenly realized that nothing of my original plan had been realized. This would certainly mean the program’s supervisor would never again ask me to teach.

But once again, things turned out differently! To my complete surprise, the supervisor immediately asked when I would be returning. Had she mistaken me for someone else? I finally agreed to come back, but only on the condition that I could arrange my lessons completely on my own terms. Topics could be specified, but I wanted to be able to decide for myself how I’d work on them with the respective group of participants. She had no objections and agreed.

Over time, I received numerous other assignments from other sponsors and educational institutions in Munich and the surrounding area. Word had got around that there was a “Dutchman” who could handle difficult young people. The three days of lecturing became nearly ten years, from the end of 1996 to mid-2006 (with a 7-month break in 1998).

These years greatly influenced me, and I learned a lot about how people of different backgrounds with different educational levels can work together in a sincere and respectful way. And above all, working with adolescents has made it clear that no matter how difficult and behaviorally challenged they are, they all have potential that can be developed. This is a task that falls to educators in particular. They can create the space that is necessary for the development of these students. Being able to discover and unfold their own potential has a positive effect on the self-esteem and self-efficacy of adolescents, and is also crucial in terms of whether they will feel accepted by society.

I then made working with adolescents the subject of my doctorate in ethnology at LMU Munich. It had become clear that my pedagogical work with young people had many parallels to the so-called Fox project – out of this project a new approach to ethnology ultimately emerged in the 1960s, called action anthropology.<sup>1</sup>

In my dissertation *Jugendliche – ein fremder Stamm? (Adolescents – a foreign tribe?)*, I presented in detail the experiences I gained from my years of teaching unemployed youth, and compared these experiences with the results of the Fox project.<sup>2</sup> Here I wish to briefly mention the requirements and principles of action anthropology, which postulates a so-called *System of Values* – a canon of values, which, in my work with youth at that time played an important role, and still continues to, in my professorship at the Munich University of Applied Sciences.

## Action Anthropology – System of Values

In action anthropology there are no rigid guidelines, no fixed methods of how to act in the “field of research”. Instead, there are certain values, such as UNDERSTANDING, INTERACTION, RESPONSIBILITY and COMPLEMENTARY VIRTUES, which serve as guidelines for action.<sup>3</sup> In my opinion, these can also be very valuable and helpful for teachers in teaching situations and can enormously enrich the way in which teaching content is imparted. Transferred to the teaching situation in educational institutions, the action-anthropology canon of values could be interpreted as follows.

For teachers, UNDERSTANDING is about perceiving the thinking and behavior of the participants from an “inner perspective”. This so-called *emic understanding* is also about revealing and becoming aware of one’s own subjective perception filters and conditioning. Only when I am aware of these can I succeed in opening myself to the views of my participants.

INTERACTION involves creating a framework for teachers in which all participants are respected and valued and can contribute to the lessons using their own abilities.

RESPONSIBILITY for teachers implies that participants are supported in achieving more self-determination and self-efficacy. This includes teaching participants knowledge and skills and strengthening their self-confidence.

Among the COMPLEMENTARY VIRTUES are PATIENCE, HUMILITY and LEARNING AND REFLECTING. These virtues give teachers the opportunity to engage more in an *eye-level dialogue* with the participants. By signaling that learning and designing lessons are reciprocal and that they, as teachers, can also learn from the participants, an atmosphere of mutual acceptance and respect is created, which motivates participants to become involved in the discourses.

Last but not least, HUMOR and AUTHENTICITY also play a significant role in action anthropology. Teaching must not lack “humor” as it contributes to a relaxed atmosphere. As a teacher it is also important to be authentic. In the context of the Munich Model, being authentic for me also means showing that you are as engaged with the exercises as the participants are, and that you’re also gaining new experiences. Every now and then, in class, I tell short anecdotes to illustrate certain topics related to the practice of mindfulness and meditation in the context of real life. These not only bring a liveliness to the lessons, but they’ve been shown to help students better integrate the practices into their own lives.

### SOURCE

de Bruin, Andreas (2004). *Jugendliche – ein fremder Stamm? Jugendarbeitslosigkeit aus aktionsethnologischer Sicht. Zur kritischen Reflexion von Lehrkräften und Unterrichtskonzepten im deutschen Schul- und Ausbildungssystem*. Münster: LIT Verlag.



<sup>1</sup> The action anthropology approach was developed by the American anthropologist Sol Tax (1907-1995) together with a team of students at the University of Chicago. They had originally tried to help the Mesquakie, a group of Native Americans in Iowa, to integrate into the "American Way of Life". However, the aid programs developed by the students completely failed, as they had entirely overlooked the fact that the Mesquakie consciously accepted their social problems such as poverty, unemployment and social declassification because they didn't want to abandon their own culture for integration into American society. In the development of the programs, the students had not included the Mesquakie's concerns at all, only considering their own viewpoint in the project. Under the direction of Sol Tax, a thorough error analysis of the approach by the students, as well as initial attempts to initiate a genuine dialogue with the Mesquakie, ultimately led to this new approach to understanding in anthropology. (Cf. de Bruin 2004, p. 21 f.)

<sup>2</sup> See de Bruin 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. de Bruin 2004, p. 22.



"Sweeping away"  
thoughts is like cleaning  
out an apartment.

# About the Exercises

The exercises listed below are taken from the courses of the Munich Model and were presented more or less in the same order. In addition, the courses also include material on mindfulness and meditation research and examples of implementation in various professional fields (see “Munich Model”, p. 59 f.).

Presented and practiced sequentially through the teaching units, the various forms of sitting meditation play a central role in the courses. Once all of the sitting meditation techniques have been introduced, participants can choose one that they feel suits them best. The participants then practice this chosen meditation form throughout further teaching units, which always begin with a sitting meditation.

It should be mentioned here that the meditation instructions in this book are intended to give students an initial introduction to different meditation forms and techniques. For further study, it's always recommended that they follow the guidelines and instructions found in the literature related to each of the specific meditations. Students are also reminded that have the option to attend external courses offered through various organizations that teach meditation and that they can further educate themselves through such seminars and courses (see “Risks”, p. 95).

There are four forms of sitting meditation to choose from:

- Breath
- Maranatha
- Focusing between the eyebrows
- So'ham / I am That

If the participants already have meditation experience, they are free to choose whether they practice their own chosen form of sitting meditation or to practice one of the four forms mentioned above. However, in this case the teacher must check whether the respective technique comes from a recognized meditation school and whether it is of benefit to the respective participant in this context (see “Risks”, p. 89 ff.).

The sitting meditations are so important as they give participants the opportunity to focus inwardly and to more deeply experience an inner silence.

An exercise that we usually practiced in the middle of the course comes from the teachings of Nisargadatta Maharaj (1897-1981). The exercise can convey an intensive experience that goes beyond the level of thought (see exercise “What is ‘I am?’”, p. 108 f.).

In addition to the sitting meditations, students have the opportunity to practice the following exercises in mindfulness:

- Mindful everyday life
- Mindful cooking and eating
- Mindful communication
- Body scan
- Loving kindness / Metta Meditation
- Walking meditation
- Sutras
- Sound meditation

These exercises are helpful in that they promote insight into one's own physical, emotional and mental processes and the interactions between them. Although they are very much related to everyday life and are mostly directed outwards, they convey a state of calmness and inner peace. They also play a supportive role to the more inward-directed sitting meditations.

### Test anxiety

Since the summer semester of 2019, workshops in overcoming exam stress have been offered in cooperation with the student advisory service of the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences (see "Munich Model", p. 61). Among the techniques presented, the Vietnamese Buddhist monk and mindfulness teacher Thich Nhat Hanh suggests an effective exercise for dealing constructively with one's own fears called: "Entering your own living room". As this exercise has not yet been included in the classes and therefore doesn't appear in the student's meditation journals, it won't be further elaborated on in this book.

The exercise can be found in: Thich Nhat Hanh (2009). *Reconciliation. Healing the Inner Child*. Berkeley: Parallax Press, p. 9 ff.

## Where and when is the meditation done?

Whenever possible, sitting meditation should be practiced in a quiet place without distractions. It's best if possible to arrange a special place for this activity. In this respect, the Catholic priest and Benedictine monk John Main (1926-1982) writes in his book *Word into Silence* "It is also helpful to meditate regularly in the same place and also at the same time every day because this helps a creative rhythm in our life to grow, with meditation as a kind of pulse-beat sounding the rhythm."<sup>1</sup> However, due to a cramped living space or irregular working hours, it's not always possible to maintain such a fixed arrangement. Depending on where you are, there are also suitable periods for meditation in the course of daily life, for example during work breaks, during longer train or bus commutes, or while waiting for appointments. It's important that in whatever place it is, you're not disturbed, for instance, by too much noise or people trying to speak to you as you meditate.<sup>2</sup>

## Posture

There are a number of options in terms of body posture during sitting meditation. It's important that the posture is unconstrained and the body is at ease and relaxed during meditation. Those who have difficulty sitting on a meditation cushion or bench can also sit on a chair. In this case, the feet should be in contact with the floor and the hands should be folded in the lap. The chin is lowered a bit to keep the neck relaxed. It is important that the back, the spine is upright. In exceptional cases, if sitting is not possible, one can also lie down. However, it's much more difficult to remain concentrated and focused when lying down, and there's a high risk of falling asleep.

When sitting on a meditation bench, the legs can be put to the side or slid under the bench. The sideways position of the legs also works when sitting on a meditation cushion. As far as the positioning of the legs is concerned, there is the half-lotus posture, the

whole lotus posture. In the latter, the legs are crossed. First the right leg is placed over the left leg and then the left leg over the right leg. In the half-lotus position, the right leg is placed under the left calf and then the left leg is placed under the right calf. The hands are placed in the lap. When the right outer palm is placed on the left palm of the inner hand, with the thumb tips of both hands touching, one has the “posture of equanimity”.<sup>3</sup> The chin is lowered slightly towards the throat. However, it’s not absolutely necessary to practice the posture of equanimity for sitting meditation.<sup>4</sup>

In class we always practice sitting meditation with our eyes closed. Some forms of meditation, however, are practiced with the eyes half open. In a few cases, some students have reported that they don’t feel comfortable meditating with their eyes closed and prefer to keep them open a little. To do this they choose an external point upon which to fix their gaze, about 1.5 meters on the floor in front of them.

Among the overall range of exercises, there is little emphasis on body movement, apart from walking meditation. There are two reasons for this: first, the available class time is already too limited to allow sufficient time to cover the various topics and mindfulness and meditation exercises; second, there are already meditative-body-oriented courses offered at the university, such as Tai chi and Yoga.

## Concentrated but not tense

When a master once asked his students how they experienced meditation, one student replied that he could hardly concentrate because his leg itched. Thereupon the master said: “Then scratch it!”

I always tell this short story to my students. Afterwards I explain that of course it doesn’t mean that you should always scratch if you feel itchy during meditation. It’s more about not being tense. It’s important to filter out whether the body is just “responding” and demanding attention or whether it really is reflecting a health problem. Just as thoughts can distract, so can the body. If the body is only “restless”, it’s important to learn steadily to ignore it. However, it may be necessary to open our eyes briefly or to slightly change our sitting posture. If, however, we develop headaches, nausea, or dizziness, it’s then necessary to stop meditating. It may even be best to suspend the practice of meditation for a period of time (see “Risks”, p. 89 ff.).<sup>5</sup>

Inner tension and restlessness may arise if, for example, we have to cough or sneeze, but we refrain from doing so because we don’t want to disturb the other participants. If we must cough or sneeze repeatedly, it’s better to temporarily leave the room.

Even an intense urge to swallow can be a source of disturbance for the affected person. Though, usually this urge to swallow quickly subsides. It’s important not to worry or think about it.

The humor already mentioned in the previous section plays an important role here as well.

For me it’s important that in class we feel comfortable and can laugh now and then. It helps to loosen up the atmosphere and reduce any tensions that may exist among the participants. However, we take the exercises very seriously. We are disciplined as we do the exercises, but not tense or strained.

In his book *Mindfulness in Plain English* the Buddhist monk and president of the Bhavana Society, Mahathera Henepola Gunarantana, discusses numerous problems and distractions that can occur during meditation. He also outlines how to avoid them.<sup>6</sup> The section “Breathing Meditation” (see p. 102 f.), describes some of his advice for dealing with the loss of concentration during meditation on the breath.

## Meditation and time

The theme of “time” plays an essential role in the practice of mindfulness and meditation. From the feedback I get from students following the sitting meditations, it’s clear that the participants’ sense of time varies greatly. For example, although the objective time was 10 minutes, the subjective perception of time was often completely different. For some, the “sitting” seemed to be much shorter than 10 minutes, for others time hardly passed.

Another aspect of time refers to the fact that many participants find it difficult to make time for mindfulness and meditation exercises in their normal everyday lives. Although most participants have themselves already experienced the beneficial and relaxing effects of meditation, many are still inclined to prioritize other everyday activities over meditation.

The moments spent in meditation are something very precious. It’s not about how much time passes. It’s a point where past and future no longer play a role; where we come into contact with our inner space – independent of (time) constructs and conditioning. As soon as one becomes more aware of this, it’s easier to make “time” for the practice of meditation.

Time also has a lot to do with *mind-wandering*. In our thoughts, we’re often in the past or in the future. Mind-wandering can be reduced through mindfulness and meditation, and we learn to be more in the here and now again.

The aspects covered in this section illustrate the connection between time and the practice of mindfulness and meditation. And this is why a discussion on time is always an integral part of the courses. Many related questions are thus explored, for example: What is time? Does time exist at all? What are past and future?

The Indian spiritual teacher Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986) distinguishes between chronological time and psychological time. For the latter, “It is the interval between idea and action.”<sup>7</sup> If one implements his intention directly, there is no psychological time. To Krishnamurti, what is most important is *the now*, awareness of the present moment. Past and future thus play a subordinate role.<sup>8</sup> Time in this sense is ultimately a human construct, and we are introduced to it in a very comprehensive way no later than when we enter elementary school as children.

Discussions on the subject of “time” are always very stimulating, especially those that take place in the elective course “Stress Management and Meditation” offered through the Faculty of General and Interdisciplinary Studies. As all students of the Munich University of Applied Sciences are able to apply for this course, the participants come from many different fields of study, such as aircraft engineering, mechanical engineering, computer science, tourism, design, electrical engineering, etc. Due to very different perspectives among the disciplines as well as the participants’ own views, there’s a fruitful discourse every time.

In my own long-term practice of meditation I have had the experience that it's often difficult to hold out until the end, especially during longer meditation sessions. So many thoughts were circulating through my head with so much frequency! In particular, I thought about all the things I still had to do and whether I should be doing something else, besides sitting in meditation. I still remained sitting, but the thoughts were often very persistent. Sometimes I also thought about a eating a bar of chocolate as a "reward", which I would usually buy after my meditation. At some point I understood that it's possible to get rid of these thoughts and just sit: not negotiate with the mind! From that moment on, before every meditation I would tell myself inwardly: "In any case, I'm going to sit until the end." In the beginning, thinking tried to lure me out of meditation, to make suggestions to me about what I could do while sitting, later these thoughts faded away. Like a little childen who at some point stop begging for candy because they realize that they won't get any anyway!

## How long do we meditate for?

Sitting meditations can last from a few minutes to several hours (for example during a retreat). As described in detail under "Risks" (p. 89 ff.), one should not overdo it, and in case of longer retreats one should always have previous meditation experience. For one's own practice at home, I usually recommend 15 to 20 minutes once or twice a day. Of course, the duration of meditation also depends on the respective meditation technique. Further information can be found in specialist literature and through schools of meditation (see also "About the exercises", p. 83)

## As a teacher, participate

It's important that teachers are well acquainted with the various mindfulness and meditation exercises and that they have themselves mastered these before instructing their students. Their own regular practice is therefore a prerequisite. Once the exercise sequences have been internalized, it's possible to participate in the practicing the meditation exercises with the students, and to focus attention on the participants as well as the common field of practice. This mutual presence results in an authentic, mindful form of instruction and ensures that a SHARED SENSE AND EXPERIENCE OF BEING can develop.

In this regard, the sitting meditations are particularly recommended. My own experience has shown that meditating together conveys togetherness and strengthens the group

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<sup>1</sup> Main 2014, p. 11; see also Muktananda 1989, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Gunaratana 2019a, p. 75 f.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ricard 2015c, p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> For details on posture see Gunaratana 2019a, p. 57 ff.; Kabat-Zinn 2013, p. 54 ff.; Main 2014, p. 8; Ott 2015, p. 27 ff.; Ricard 2015c, p. 47 ff.; Muktananda 1999, p. xxii f. and p. 25 f.

<sup>5</sup> For guidance on how to deal with physical pain and body distractions during meditation, see Gunaratana 2019a, p. 94 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Gunaratana 2019a, p. 91 ff. und 109 ff.; Gunaratana 2019b, p. 69 ff.; Muktananda 1989, p. 87 ff. and Muktananda 1999, p. 22 ff.

<sup>7</sup> Krishnamurti 2010, p. 74.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

# Risks

In addition to the many positive effects of mindfulness and meditation exercises, as described in the research section (see p. 41 ff.), there are also some potential risks involved if the exercises are not done correctly or if participants have serious mental health issues – although experience indicates this is not a frequent concern in a university context, it's important to address these issues responsibly. Before the program begins, it's essential to discuss key concerns with the participants. Several important points are highlighted below.

The most significant risks are:<sup>1</sup>

- A prior diagnosis of psychiatric, psychosomatic or somatic illnesses/predisposition
- Mental and/or emotional instability
- Overly ambitious goals / the undertaking of meditation techniques that are too demanding
- Practicing meditation without a teacher or group guidance
- Practicing meditation with guidance by inexperienced teachers

## Pre-existing psychiatric illnesses

“Psychiatric illnesses” are understood to mean clinical disorders with a clear disease value such as schizophrenia, psychoses, bipolar disorders, anxiety disorders and depression as well as trauma-related disorders, but also personality disorders such as borderline personality disorder or narcissistic personality disorder. In addition, it makes sense in this context to also consider potentially existing “preconditions” in the sense of physical, psychosomatic or psychosocial vulnerabilities such as epileptic symptoms, ADHD, migraines or addiction/dependency problems. To what extent the use of mindfulness and meditation exercises is even possible with this type of pre-existing condition or predisposition depends on the severity of the impairment and the potential danger from practicing meditation. It has proven a good idea to follow a “traffic light” model, which divides people interested in meditation into categories: “harmless”, “potentially endangered” and “most likely endangered and therefore participation in the program not recommended”. Although, when in doubt, such concerns can only be confirmed by a course leader with medical or psychological training. Course instructors without this background should therefore not be afraid to openly express their reservations to participants if they themselves are unsure, and recommend that they consult medically/psychologically trained experts who are also sufficiently familiar with meditative practices.

Niko Kohls, medical psychologist and Professor of Health Sciences and Health Promotion and board member of the Society for Consciousness Science and Consciousness Culture, points out that an important criterion for the application of mindfulness-based interventions to psychiatric diseases is the extent to which a sufficiently stable ego structure or ego stability is still present in the person concerned. If this is not the case, interventions cannot work and should not be carried out. In individual cases, the symptoms may even be intensified, such as dissociative processes, depression or anxiety, or in the case of trauma sequelae, the occurrence of stressful memories, known as intrusions.<sup>2</sup>

Kohls – who in addition to conducting and evaluating numerous mindfulness programs in school, university, and work contexts, has also worked with soldiers in the field of mission-related stress management – reports that in highly stressed groups/patients, it's often only basic trust exercises that can initially be applied sensibly. It's only after such an exercise as being carried in water, that low-threshold mindfulness-based interventions, related to everyday life and preferably physical can be useful. This ensures that the duration, depth and quality of meditation correspond to the psycho-emotional competencies and resources of the person concerned. This prevents the development of too early an inner orientation and unintentional confrontation with stressful thoughts and feelings, which in extreme cases could lead to re-traumatization.

In this context, Ortwin Lüers, Ph.D., a specialist in the field of mindfulness-based treatment of trauma, emphasizes that in the case of trauma, the conscious or unconscious steering towards stressful issues can unintentionally enable injuries to resurface, triggering sudden flashbacks. Due to the trauma, a reassessment of the traumatic situation in the present is usually not successful and the result can be dissociation<sup>3</sup> and re-traumatization.<sup>4</sup> Another point that Lüers says must be considered is that people who suffer from chronic psychiatric illnesses, particularly those with long-lasting depression, often also experience profound physical exhaustion. Such chronic psychiatric diseases are emotionally, mentally and above all biologically determined. For this reason, when applying mindfulness exercises, it is crucial not to exceed the participant's available energy level, otherwise the exercise is likely to fail. This failure can quickly lead to negative self-attribution, which places an additional burden on the person concerned.<sup>5</sup> Starting with too much intensity can also lead to the consequence of total demotivation.

According to Lüers, the most important factor for the successful implementation of mindfulness exercises is a pleasant atmosphere that reflects warm-heartedness, acceptance and compassion, so that participants feel no pressure to succeed. Thus, it's not about placing emphasis on a particular goal of the exercise, such as improving attention or stress reduction – these should be promoted only indirectly.

Like Kohls, Lüers also addresses the importance of focusing on the body. In addition, he recommends that the exercise practice for people with pre-existing psychiatric conditions should be designed in such a way that the exercises are suited to a short concentration span and kept short, with no great effort involved. If the therapeutic work involves several people at the same time, it should be done in small groups. The environment should be comfortable and warm, and the eyes should preferably not be closed. Breathing exercises should be kept very simple and should only be briefly performed.<sup>6</sup>

In order to avoid an aggravation of symptoms by the mindfulness-based interventions and the reoccurrence of trauma, Lüers believes that professional care by therapists with their own mindfulness and meditation experience is essential for people with trauma.<sup>7</sup>

In his book, *Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness. Practices for Safe and Transformative Healing* David Treleaven, Ph.D., a psychologist, trauma therapist and mindfulness specialist, emphasizes that practicing simple meditation exercises automatically awakens traumatic stimuli. In his opinion, it's important for people to “learn they can shift their focus away from traumatic stimuli during mindfulness practice.”<sup>8</sup>, therefore it's important that “anchors of attention” such as objects in the room or focusing on the feeling of having one's feet on the floor be used.<sup>9</sup> Treleaven therefore recommends that only short exercises be offered. Body scans, for example, which often take 30 to 45 minutes in the regular MBSR programs<sup>10</sup>, are too long for trauma survivors and may trigger anxiety and a feeling of alienation rather than promote relaxation.<sup>11</sup>

Brigitte Fuchs, Ph.D., meditation teacher and private lecturer at the Julius-Maximilians-Universität of Würzburg, warns against too rapid an introduction to meditation techniques when working with those with mental illness. She has developed the concept of “Therapeutic Meditation” for this target group, which consists of eight successive stages and introduces the participants step by step to mindfulness and meditation techniques.<sup>12</sup> Fuchs also advocates for intensive and individually tailored mindfulness and meditation support for those affected.

The Professor of Psychological Sciences and Internal Medicine at Texas University (USA), Yi-Yuan Tang, also points out the potential negative consequences of mindfulness exercises in the case of various conditions: “Regarding patient populations with PTSD, schizophrenia, and epilepsy<sup>13</sup> or individuals who are at risk for psychosis or seizures, some concerns have been raised that mindfulness practice might put these individuals at elevated risk for exacerbation of these symptoms, or trigger adverse events or experiences such as a trauma or depressive episodes.”<sup>14</sup> Tang sees a need for further research to better explore the potential applications in this area and the associated risks, due to the limited amount of empirical studies.<sup>15</sup>

Peter Sedlmeier, Professor of Research Methodology and Evaluation, writes in his book *Die Kraft der Meditation. Was die Wissenschaft darüber weiß [The power of meditation. What science knows about it]*: “While there is now widespread agreement that meditation can be helpful in the treatment of depression and anxiety as well as other emotional and psychological problems, there is still controversy over whether it is suitable for therapy in the case of psychoses such as schizophrenia.”<sup>16</sup>

In his book *Meditationstiefe. Grundlagen, Forschung, Training, Psychotherapie [Meditation Depth. Basics, Research, Training, Psychotherapy]*, Harald Piron, Ph.D., psychotherapist and co-founder of the Society for Meditation and Meditation Research (SMMR) and the Quality Circle for Meditation-Based Psychotherapy, presents a series of exercises that can be applied in a psychotherapeutic context; including the areas of anxiety disorders and depression.<sup>17</sup> However, Piron also sees the possibility of side effects and contraindications for the practice of meditation in a therapeutic context and warns that under no circumstances should the affected person be left alone when incriminating elements emerge from the unconscious.<sup>18</sup>

In his detailed descriptions of suitable meditative exercises for depression, Piron distinguishes between motor, physiological, emotional and cognitive effects.<sup>19</sup> In particular, by promoting an awareness of self-responsibility, meditation can help the affected person to find a way out of depression.<sup>20</sup>

Niko Kohls points out that mindfulness-based interventions are definitely powerful programs that have the potential to achieve highly relevant health-promoting effects. As an example, standardized mindfulness programs for depression, with the exception of severe depression, can even surpass the effect of psychotropic drugs.<sup>21</sup> Among other things, they help the respective person to be more present in the here and now and to be more aware of the current moment and to focus less on negative thoughts. By reducing the wandering of thoughts, so-called mind wandering, through the practice of mindfulness, brooding and worrying usually also decrease.

Another important factor is that mindfulness practice has a positive influence on self-regulation and self-efficacy and that those affected are better able to take countermeasures on their own instead of being dependent on medication.<sup>22</sup> Mindfulness practice can also improve overall mental hygiene.<sup>23</sup>

As for the treatment of depression, loving kindness meditations or metta meditations can also help. These meditation techniques strengthen the connection with the social environment and counteract the subjective feeling of being isolated. According to neuroscientist Richard Davidson, one of the pioneers of mindfulness and meditation research, the experience of social connectedness is an important parameter for a healthy psyche.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, people with depression often experience melancholy and frequently suffer from a feeling of loneliness and exclusion.<sup>25</sup> “Opening the heart invigorates the ability to relate. The experience of being able to give (and as a sick person not only having to take) conveys a feeling of inner richness.”<sup>26</sup>

When applying mindfulness and meditation techniques with persons with acute and non-acute psychiatric disorders, it is important that these techniques are not used to replace psychotherapy. If applied without professional psychological and psychotherapeutic experience on the part of the facilitator, there is a great danger that the approaches may have harmful consequences, especially in the case of severe disorders such as schizophrenia and borderline disorders.<sup>27</sup> Piron emphasizes: “Psychotherapy and meditation are not mutually exclusive, but can run side by side on an equal footing. They can even be coordinated to complement each other.”<sup>28</sup>

According to Ulrike Anderssen-Reuster, Ph.D., Head of Department for Psychosomatic Medicine in Dresden-Neustadt, this includes that mindfulness and meditation teachers should recognize when participants with mental disorders need to be referred to psychotherapists and vice versa – that psychotherapists enable patients to use such approaches if this is feasible from a standpoint of health, and if these patients show interest in such approaches and/or express the desire to take up such options.<sup>29</sup>

## Health problems without previous psychiatric illnesses/preload

Even if there is no previous psychiatric illness, the practice of mindfulness and meditation techniques can still cause problems. Since these exercises have an effect on the personal development of the respective person, entirely new experiences can sometimes arise, which are not always positive. This can include experiencing a certain emptiness and loneliness or the relativization of previous habits and views. Likewise, it can increase sensitivity in sensory perception, which can create more stress.<sup>30</sup>

Piron sees the potential for abuse and the risks that can arise on the part of the meditator during the practice of mindfulness and meditation, such as when the practice reinforces one's own ego-centeredness; when it is used too much as self-optimization; when it is used to repress one's own deficits; or when the practitioner devotes himself too submissively to a spiritual teacher.<sup>31</sup>

Sedlmeier, too, cautions against engaging in the evasion of one's own deficits: “However, one should under no circumstances try to ignore one's emotional difficulties and psychological problems, attempting to solve them in the meditation fast lane: spiritual bypassing won't work.”<sup>32</sup>

To enable more insight into the practice of meditation and the possible occurrence of spiritual crises, Michael Tremmel and Ulrich Ott, Ph.D., psychologists and mindfulness and meditation researchers at the Bender Institute of Neuroimaging at the Justus Liebig University Giessen, argue for professional systematization and categorization: “In the long run, new diagnostic categories are needed to deal properly with the variety of meditative development processes and possibly crisis-prone transitional phenomena.”<sup>33</sup>

## Munich model: dealing with psychiatric pre-illness/preload

The first priority when applying mindfulness and meditation exercises in a university context is to reduce any potential risks so that participants do not come to harm. It must be clarified in advance whether acute or non-acute psychiatric pre-existing conditions are present.

The instructor bears a great deal of responsibility here. In the event that the instructor is not trained in medicine, psychology or psychotherapy, they should contact the psychosocial counseling service at the university if they detect any signs of previous psychiatric illnesses/conditions.

In the case of the Munich Model, participants for the respective mindfulness and meditation programs are selected through an online application process. All course descriptions state as a prerequisite that participants must be in stable mental health.

For the advanced courses, participants must also prove that they already have previous experience in meditation. This can include having attended an introductory course on “Mindfulness and Meditation” or another offering within the framework of the Munich Model, or one’s own practice at a recognized meditation school.

Since the summer semester of 2020, a fact sheet is handed out to the participants in the first lesson which asks them to verify the state of their emotional and mental health. This fact sheet explains the practice of mindfulness and meditation in summary form. The participants are then required to sign an agreement that states they are not currently undergoing psychiatric or psychological treatment and are not taking psychotropic drugs. In the case of a previous psychiatric illness or condition, they must first consult with the treating therapist and present a certificate in order to be able to participate in the respective course.<sup>34</sup>

There are basically several ways of confirming the participants’ mental health in every program offered under the Munich Model: firstly, in the question and answer session of the introductory lesson and secondly, in the group discussions that follow the exercises. There’s also a third opportunity in the regular courses: in reviewing the students’ meditation journals.

In the first teaching unit there is a question and answer session which asks students to answer: why did they sign up for the course? What do they expect to get out of the course? Do they already have experience with mindfulness and meditation techniques? There is also a discussion of what mindfulness and meditation involves, and specifically what meditation is not as well as defining some of the prevalent misconceptions about it.<sup>35</sup> In particular, emphasis is placed on the fact that meditation is not about ambition or ambitious intentions and achievement. The importance of health and a stable mental condition is also explained. Anyone who is uncertain about this and has personal questions can talk to me about it in detail after class.



Secondly, after the exercises in the framework of the program, regular feedback sessions are held in small groups and then in the entire group. In this way it is possible to observe how the participants cope with the respective exercises. Moreover, they can also learn from each other how to practice the exercises correctly and how to deal with any difficulties.

As part of the regular courses, the meditation journals are handed in for a week in the middle of the semester. I then read them and thus have an additional opportunity to check how the participants are coping with the respective exercises. Possible corrections to the exercises are then discussed as feedback during the courses. This happens anonymously; by sharing the individual difficulties in the whole group, the other participants can also learn from them. In the case of serious problems, a personal one-on-one conversation takes place with the respective participants, for example, directly after class or during office hours.

A private, personal conversation with the instructor is always available to the participants. Therefore, in addition to professional competence, the factor of trust between teachers and participants is very important (see p. 81).

To date, among the 2000 participants that have taken part in the courses through the Munich Model, there has only been one student who had to leave the course a result of acute trauma.

Even in the additional open courses, which are freely accessible to all students, only a few have thus far been denied participation. These were not properly “grounded”. After a personal conversation, they were advised to meditate less or not at all for a certain time. They were given instructions for everyday mindfulness exercises in order to become more firmly established in normal (everyday) life. They were always given the opportunity to re-register for the program after a certain period of time.

In recent years, more and more participants with physical limitations, including wheelchair users, have applied for the courses. As each of them had a stable mental and emotional condition, they were welcome to participate. This has enormously enriched the courses. Some exercises had to be adapted for them, for example, a walking meditation became a “roll meditation”, which was a heartfelt experience for the other participants. The group discussions about how to deal with problems and stressful thoughts also became more profound. Once a blind student also took part in a course. All the participants were impressed by the way she described her experiences during meditation.

## Too ambitious goals/ Too demanding meditation techniques

Another risk is that participants want to achieve too much at once and engage in the exercises too rashly and excessively. This problem can be exacerbated in the regular courses, where credits including grades and ECTS are also awarded. I try to defuse the risk of being overly motivated by making it clear to the participants that it is about quality and not quantity. It's about getting to know oneself better through the practice of mindfulness and meditation and to listen well to one's own inner voice. Above all it's about gaining more insight into one's own mental, emotional and physical processes and their interactions. For example, at what time of day do I like to meditate, or when not? Why does meditation sometimes go better and sometimes less well?

Ulrich Ott points out that people with overly ambitious goals run the risk of becoming too far removed from reality, of becoming unmoored and “hovering two centimeters

above the ground”<sup>36</sup>. In extreme cases, this could lead to depersonalization and derealization syndrome, whereby the person in question loses touch with himself and his environment. According to Ott, in this case it is advisable to reduce or suspend meditation for a certain period of time. In the first instance, it is then a matter of becoming more down-to-earth again, for example through physical activity such as gardening. A balanced, healthy diet is also important. Even a “hearty meal” can be helpful in some cases.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to the risk of intensity of effort being far too high, there is also the risk of choosing techniques that are too demanding and overtaxing. This is often the case when meditation beginners sign up for longer silent retreats. The risk of overstraining is particularly high when there is also too little sleep and too little food. Ott compares the path of meditation exercise with mountain climbing: “If you want to reach the top happily, you have to plan the path well.”<sup>38</sup>

Within the framework of the Munich Model, the practiced mindfulness exercises can be performed well and safely without the risk of overexertion. As far as the more intensive sitting meditations are concerned, the meditation times are increased gradually and according to the level of experience of the participants. If at the beginning the sitting meditation is done for only a few minutes, from the middle of the series of classes it lasts 15 to 20 minutes. For home practice it is also recommended that the meditations not exceed 20 minutes. If participants wish to delve deeper into a particular meditation form, it is recommended they attend recognized, certified meditation schools where they can familiarize themselves with more advanced meditation techniques under the guidance of professional teachers.

Some 50 students from the Munich Model courses, for example, have now studied the “Vipassana” form of meditation and have participated in 10-day retreats at external meditation centers. Other participants have received further training through MBSR courses or have studied Christian meditation forms and Zen techniques during monastic stays. Some have also visited centers such as the Inter-Sein of Thich Nhat Hanh or the Munich Sri Chinmoy Center.

## Practicing meditation without guidance by teacher or group

A further risk when dealing with meditation can also arise if one tries to learn certain meditation exercises by oneself and thus receives no feedback to ensure one is doing the exercises correctly. In this case, the important dialogue about this is also lacking. It becomes particularly problematic if, in addition, there are also risks such as pre-existing psychiatric illnesses, overly ambitious goals and other personal characteristics that are non-conducive to meditation. As explained above, in such cases the guidance of a teacher is necessary.

In general, professional guidance is preferable, especially if one wants to intensify and deepen the practice of mindfulness and meditation.<sup>39</sup> If one also practices regularly in a group or community (sangha<sup>40</sup>), one has the opportunity to exchange experiences.<sup>41</sup>

In the context of the courses offered by the Munich Model, considerable emphasis is placed on group exchange. This is especially the case in the courses where participants meet weekly. In conversation with an established group, the participants can learn more about the successes and difficulties of the others.

## Practicing meditation with guidance by inexperienced teachers

Harald Piron describes in his already mentioned handbook a number of qualitative criteria which can be helpful in the search for a suitable meditation program; he lists among others: the qualification of the teacher, the authenticity of the school and transmission, the organizational structure and the way they present themselves, their openness to science and research, as well as entrance fees and participation fees.<sup>42</sup>

These criteria are important because meditation techniques have a strong impact on the overall mental health of the individual. “For obvious reasons, extreme caution is therefore required when attempting to influence instinctive physical processes such as breathing or heartbeat. An abuse of the physical process can ruin a person’s health and considerably disturb his mental balance, hence the great importance of a reliable guide.”<sup>43</sup>

As explained in the sections “Research” (p. 41 ff.) and “Conclusion” (p. 169 f.), an essential point for a successful implementation of mindfulness and meditation programs is the way they are taught. A distinction must be made between the teaching of basic mindfulness exercises and the teaching of meditation techniques.

For teachers and lecturers, there are various training and continuing education opportunities, for example, the MBSR training courses or the certificate training courses on the topic of “Mindfulness in Teaching” as offered by the universities in Jena and Osnabrück (see p. 65 and p. 170). If, however, more inwardly directed sitting meditations are taught, the meditation teacher must also have many years of experience. Piron writes: “Only after he has thoroughly studied and examined the meditative path by himself and with other companions, and then comes to the conclusion that it does not seriously harm anyone, but helps in many ways, if it is followed in the right way, can he teach this kind of practice with a clear conscience.”<sup>44</sup>

Within the framework of the Munich Model, instructors need several years of meditation experience as well as proven participation in silence retreats to teach the sitting meditations. Several times during the semester, exchange meetings take place among the lecturers at which teaching experiences and related topics are discussed.

A good teacher should above all be authentic. “What matters is that something of the path he himself has taken for the greater part of his life so far shines through him or is expressed in him in an authentic way.”<sup>45</sup>

## Conclusion

Despite the risks highlighted in this section, which can lead to harmful consequences if mindfulness and meditation approaches are not applied correctly or if participants have serious mental health issues, the numerous positive effects speak for themselves. In the last two decades in particular, mindfulness and meditation research has scientifically proven that mindfulness and meditation promote, for example, mental hygiene, concentration and attention, emotion regulation and a constructive approach to stress (see p. 46 ff.).

The ten years of the Munich Model have also confirmed the scientific research findings to date. I have observed numerous positive effects of mindfulness and meditation, which became evident through observations in class, in discourses with participants and in the reading of meditation journals. If the above-mentioned points regarding risks are taken into account, there is, in my opinion, no reason not to start practicing mindfulness and meditation techniques. It would be unfortunate if students who show a sincere interest in them were denied this opportunity.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Piron 2020, p. 214 ff.; Hofmann / Heise 2017; Tremmel / Ott 2017; Ott 2018, p. 64 ff.; Fuchs 2011, p. 223 ff.; Sedlmeier 2016, p. 174 ff.; In terms of risk research, Brown University (USA) has created a Meditation Safety Toolbox with a series of documents, protocols and best practice guidelines from the UMass Memorial Center for Mindfulness, the Mindfulness Centers in Bangor and Oxford, as well as other mindfulness researchers. It is available at: <https://www.brown.edu/research/labs/britton/meditation-safety-toolbox> (accessed September 13, 2020). On the subject of "Spirituelle Krisen und Krisenbegleitung" see also Tremmel / Ott 2017, p. 242.

<sup>2</sup> Telephone interview with Professor Niko Kohls on April 5, 2020. See also Piron 2020, p. 217.

<sup>3</sup> For possible signs of dissociation and cushioning measures see Treleaven 2018, p. 140 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Skype interview with Ortwin Lüers, Ph.D., on April 5, 2020.

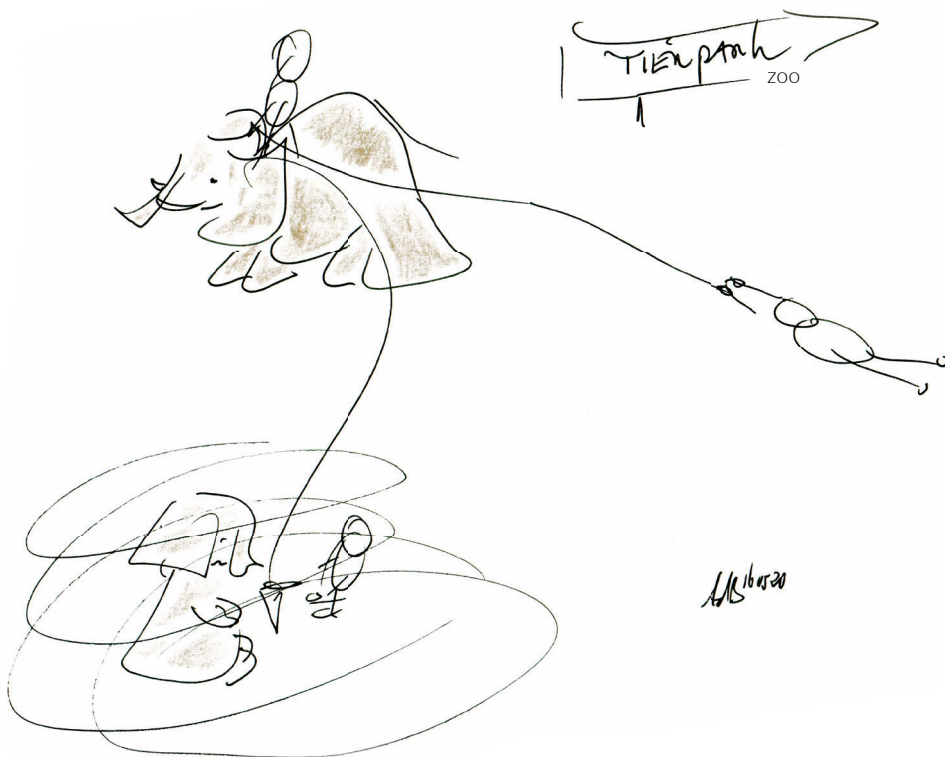
<sup>5</sup> Cf. Treleaven 2018, p. 143 f.

<sup>6</sup> Skype interview with Ortwin Lüers, Ph.D., on April 5, 2020. For criteria of mindfulness-based methods as therapy for people with psychotic disorders, see also Sedlmeier 2016, p. 187 f.

- <sup>7</sup> Lecture "Meditation bei Traumafolgestörungen. Grenzen und Möglichkeiten" on the 16th SMMR-day "Meditation und Mitgefühl", October 7-9, 2016. Also Skype interview with Ortwin Lüers, Ph.D., on April 5, 2020.
- <sup>8</sup> Treleaven 2018, p. 113.
- <sup>9</sup> Cf. Treleaven 2018, p. 113.
- <sup>10</sup> For an introduction to Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) see Kabat-Zinn 2013.
- <sup>11</sup> Cf. Treleaven 2018, p. 143.
- <sup>12</sup> Cf. Fuchs 2011, p. 226 ff.
- <sup>13</sup> In the case of epilepsy, a reduction in the number of seizures has also been reported in some cases, but there are not yet sufficient research results available (cf. Tremmel / Ott 2017, p. 235).
- <sup>14</sup> Tang 2017, p. 89.
- <sup>15</sup> Cf. Tang 2017, p. 89. A short study conducted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Center for Healthy Minds under the direction of Richard Davidson showed, for example, that special breathing exercises in the case of war veterans with PTSD reduced sleep disorders and dependence on psychotropic drugs for a number of study participants (see Ambo 2013).
- <sup>16</sup> Sedlmeier 2016, p. 186 f. [Author's translation].
- <sup>17</sup> See Piron 2020, p. 177 ff. 23; For a cognitive therapy for bipolar disorder based on mindfulness interventions see Deckersbach, Tilo / Hölzel, Britta / Eisner, Lori / Lazar, Sara W. / Nierenberg, Andrew A. (2014).
- <sup>18</sup> Cf. Piron 2020, p. 214 ff.
- <sup>19</sup> Cf. Piron 2020 p. 188 ff.
- <sup>20</sup> Cf. Piron 2020, p. 194 f.
- <sup>21</sup> Lecture "Achtsamkeit – Konzept, Forschungsstand und Messung" at LMU Munich, November 2013.
- <sup>22</sup> For the effect of self-control on depression see Tang 2017, p. 69 f.
- <sup>23</sup> For a cognitive therapy for depression based on mindfulness interventions see Segal / Williams / Teasdale 2018.
- <sup>24</sup> See lecture and panel discussion "We can change the brain, by changing the mind" on March 19, 2019a, Professor Richard Davidson in Munich at the Forum für den Wandel of the Edith-Haberland-Wagner Foundation, [www.ehw-stiftung.de](http://www.ehw-stiftung.de) (accessed September 13, 2020); see also Davidson 2018.
- <sup>25</sup> Cf. Anderssen-Reuster 2015, p. 111; see also Panel Discussion "We can change the brain, by changing the mind" March 19, 2019a, Erick Rinner MBA, in Munich at the Forum für den Wandel of the Edith-Haberland-Wagner Foundation, [www.ehw-stiftung.de](http://www.ehw-stiftung.de) (accessed September 13, 2020).
- <sup>26</sup> Fuchs 2011, p. 228 [Author's translation].
- <sup>27</sup> Cf. Sedlmeier 2016, p. 102 f.
- <sup>28</sup> Piron 2020, p. 221 f. [Author's translation]; see also Hölzel / Brähler 2015, p. 12 f.
- <sup>29</sup> Cf. Anderssen-Reuster 2015, p. 112; see also Treleaven 2018, p. xxv.
- <sup>30</sup> Cf. Tremmel / Ott 2017, p. 235 f.; see also Kohls 2017, p. 10 ff.
- <sup>31</sup> Cf. Piron 2020, p. 220 ff.; see also Hofmann / Heise 2017, p. 146 ff.
- <sup>32</sup> Sedlmeier 2016, p. 193 [Author's translation].
- <sup>33</sup> Tremmel / Ott 2017, p. 242 f. [Author's translation].
- <sup>34</sup> This approach has been successfully practiced by Professor Niko Kohls for many years in his mindfulness and meditation courses at the Coburg University of Applied Sciences and Arts. For MBSR courses, prospective students initially receive a questionnaire when they register, which is used to check, among other things, whether they have ever had suicidal thoughts and/or depression.
- <sup>35</sup> Cf. Gunaratana 2019, p. 11 ff; see also Ricard 2015c, p. 31 f.; for misunderstandings regarding mindfulness meditation see Tang 2017, p. 75 ff.
- <sup>36</sup> Ott 2018, p. 67 [Author's translation].
- <sup>37</sup> Cf. Ott 2018, p. 67.
- <sup>38</sup> Ott 2018, p. 66 [Author's translation]; see also Tremmel / Ott 2017, p. 241.
- <sup>39</sup> Cf. Sedlmeier 2016, p. 193.
- <sup>40</sup> Cf. Thich Nhat Hanh 2013, p. 7 ff.
- <sup>41</sup> Cf. Ott 2018, p. 66 f.
- <sup>42</sup> Cf. Piron 2020, p. 226 ff.
- <sup>43</sup> Ware / Jungclaussen 2002, p. 60 f. [Author's translation]; cf. Hofmann / Heise 2017, p. 151.
- <sup>44</sup> Piron 2020, p. 227 [Author's translation].
- <sup>45</sup> Piron 2020, p. 226 [Author's translation].
- <sup>46</sup> Cf. Sedlmeier 2016, p. 194; see also Ott 2018, p. 67 und Piron 2020, p. 217.



How do you catch  
an elephant?



# Sitting Meditations

*To achieve an interior act, a man must collect  
all his powers as if into a corner of his soul where,  
hiding away from all images and forms, he can get to work.  
Here, he must come to a forgetting and an unknowing.*

Meister Eckhart (1260-1327)

“Have any of you ever captured an elephant?” I often ask this question at the beginning of the first class. So far, no one has.

Imagine that an elephant has escaped from Munich’s Hellabrunn Zoo and is now on its way to Marienplatz. He’s curious and just wants to have a look around.

Let’s imagine that we want to catch him and bring him back to the zoo. How might we succeed at that? How would we capture him? For example, what would happen if we tried to climb on him in order stop him?

It wouldn’t work! The elephant is too strong, and would simply continue on its journey.

One could also try to restrain him with a rope. What would happen? If one were to do this, they’d certainly be dragged along behind the elephant. So, that wouldn’t work either.

We could, however, tie the rope to something particularly strong and stable, for example to a firmly anchored bridge post or a large tree. For this we would have to know for sure that the rope is very sturdy and could withstand a lot of force. What would happen?

The elephant would pull on the rope and perhaps also go around our stable anchor several times in a circle until it was finally tired out. And in the meantime we could relax.

I share this short story because the elephant described is a metaphor for our thoughts and our mind. When we meditate, we are confronted with the mind and its thoughts. If we are not careful, they drag us along and we become lost in them.

When meditating, it’s important to learn to distance ourselves from thought. To make this easier, you can concentrate on something else. In our story a bridge post or tree serves the purpose. Maintaining this focus is an essential part of all forms of meditation.<sup>1</sup>

In class, four separate objects of focus for sitting meditation are presented, namely:

- the breath
- the mantra “Maranatha”
- the point between the eyebrows
- the mantra “So’ham” / “I am That”

## Breathing Meditation

Focussing on the breath is practiced in countless meditation schools. Some lines of tradition, such as the Vipassana tradition, are primarily concerned with insight into thoughts, emotions and physical processes and their interactions. “When you are having a bad time, examine that experience, observe it mindfully, study the phenomenon and learn its mechanics. The way out of a trap is to study the trap itself, learn how it is built. You do this by taking the thing apart piece by piece. The trap can’t trap you if it has been taken to pieces. The result is freedom.”<sup>2</sup> The observation of one’s breath works as an anchor point, keeping one from getting lost in the various thoughts, emotions and physical reactions that may arise in the mind during this exercise.

The MBSR program’s sitting meditations, also use the breath as a primary anchor point for the purpose of “keeping one focused” and from here observing one’s thoughts without judging.

In the breathing meditation we concentrate on the incoming and outgoing breath as it enters and exits the nostrils, not paying attention to thoughts that may arise. The aim is to linger in the silence, turning our awareness more inwards.<sup>3</sup>

### Instructions

#### The singing bowl is struck once

Sit relaxed and upright

Focus on the nostrils

The breath goes in

The breath comes out again

Completely relaxed, in your own rhythm; if your attention wanders, relax and return to your nostrils

If you want to, you can also count to it, for example, inhale on 1, exhale on 1; inhale on 2 and exhale, inhale on 3 ... and so on until 5, and then start again from the beginning. Or you can also say “in” when you inhale and “out” when you exhale.<sup>4</sup>

Now and then, the singing bowl is struck once.

Now and then remind participants to focus on the nostrils ...

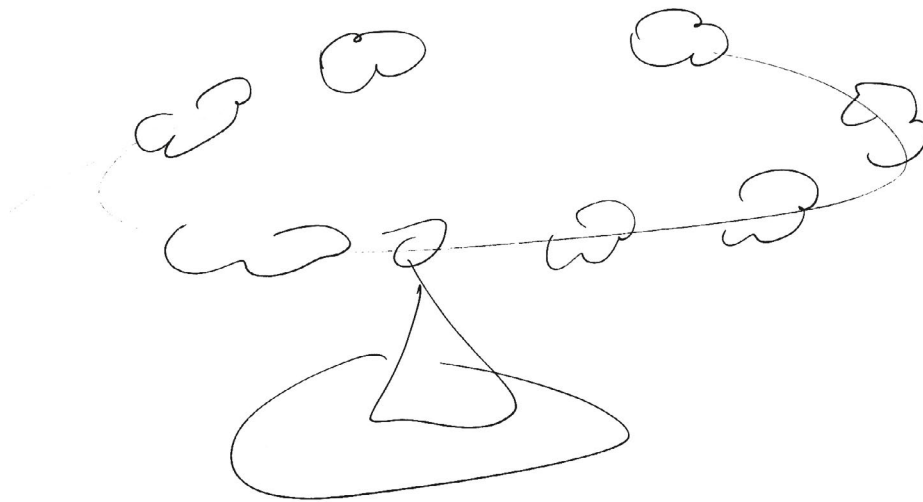
#### At the end, the singing bowl is struck 3 times

If you want to practice this meditation technique regularly, it’s best to do it for 15 to 20 minutes once or twice a day.

In class, the meditation time is gradually increased. During the first session it’s only practiced for a few minutes. With each consecutive teaching session, gradually more minutes are added until we have reached 15 to 20 minutes by the end.

## Primary literature used for the lessons

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AdB  
18.5.19

The mind thinks,  
but we are not the mind.

## Mantra Meditation “Maranatha”

While nearly half of the class participants prefer breathing meditation, almost a third of the participants find it easier to meditate with the help of a mantra (“Maranatha”). By this means, they are not so preoccupied with emerging thoughts and more easily enter a state of stillness.<sup>5</sup> With the introduction of another mantra, “So’ham” (see p. 107), in the 2019 summer semester, there was an increase in the number of participants who prefer to use a mantra.

The term “mantra” originates from Sanskrit and refers to a sacred syllable, word or verse as the “sound body” of a spiritual force that is manifested through its recitation (loud, soft or silent, inwardly). The repetition of the mantra provides a focus point and serves to align the mind.<sup>6</sup>

The use of mantras is an ages-long tradition in both Hinduism and Buddhism, and has been practiced for thousands of years. There are also mantras from the Christian tradition, such as the mantra “Maranatha”, which we have used in our classes. It’s an early

Christian mantra and derives from Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke. It was mainly through the work of the Catholic priest and Benedictine monk John Main (1926-1982) that use of this mantra in prayer and meditation came to be known. While working as a civil servant for the British Colonial Service in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, he met Swami Satyananda (1923-2009), who introduced him to the practice of meditation using the mantra “Maranatha”. Main subsequently spread this approach among Christian circles. From this, Christian meditation groups emerged who eventually joined together to form the World Communion for Christian Meditation (WCCM).<sup>7</sup>

“In meditation our way forward to this growing awareness of the Spirit praying within us lies simply in our deepening fidelity to the saying of the mantra. It is the faithful repetition of our word that integrates our whole being. It does so because it brings us to the silence, the concentration, the necessary level of consciousness that enable us to open our mind and heart to the work of the love of God in the depth of our being.”<sup>8</sup>

The word stands for several meanings: “Our Lord has Come” (Maranatha) or “Our Lord will come” or – most likely – “Come Lord. Come Lord Jesus.”<sup>9</sup>

Other possible meanings are “Jesus be with me” or “I invoke the divine in me”. This latter translation is particularly suitable for people who don’t directly identify with the Christian faith.

In this exercise, students can decide for themselves which translation for the mantra “Maranatha” they find most suitable.

## Instructions

### The singing bowl is struck once

#### Sitting relaxed and upright

You can put your hands in your lap or on your thighs

The eyes are closed and completely relaxed

Breathe in and out, consciously and calmly. The breath comes and goes by itself, in a completely relaxed manner.

Now, inwardly, you can speak the mantra

As you say it to yourself, you can divide the mantra into four syllables:

MA – RA – NA – THA.

Pronounce the mantra inwardly and listen to the inner sound.

The breath flows naturally. You can also connect the breath more consciously with the utterance of the mantra. For example upon the inhale you say MARANATHA, but when you exhale you don’t say it, remaining in silence. Or you inhale with the first two syllables MA-RA and exhale with the syllables NA-THA.<sup>10</sup> It is important that the rhythm remains fluent and natural and is not done mechanically.

### At the end, the singing bowl is struck 3 times

As for the length of time needed for regular meditation practice, John Main suggests at least twenty minutes, but twenty-five or thirty minutes, per meditation session is better.<sup>11</sup>

### Primary literature used for the lessons

Main, John (2014). *Word into Silence. A manual for Christian meditation*. Norwich: Canterbury Press.

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Ware, Kallistos / Jungclaussen, Emmanuel (2004). *Hinführung zum Herzensgebet*. Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder.

*The highest meditation is the state of complete inner stillness. In that state, not a single thought arises in the mind. However, most people cannot attain this state of stillness right away. For that reason, it is of the greatest importance for a meditator to understand how to deal with the mind.*

Swami Muktananda (1908-1982)

### Focusing on a point between the eyebrows

Another form of meditation is the focusing on a point between the eyebrows.

#### Instructions

**The singing bowl is struck once**

**Relax and close your eyes**

**Focus your attention on a point between the eyebrows**

**Remain completely relaxed, there's no pressure**

**Don't look inwardly at this spot**

**The alignment is mental**

**Be relaxed, but attentive and present**

**The singing bowl is struck once, from time to time**

**Now and then say: "keep the focus between your eyebrows"**

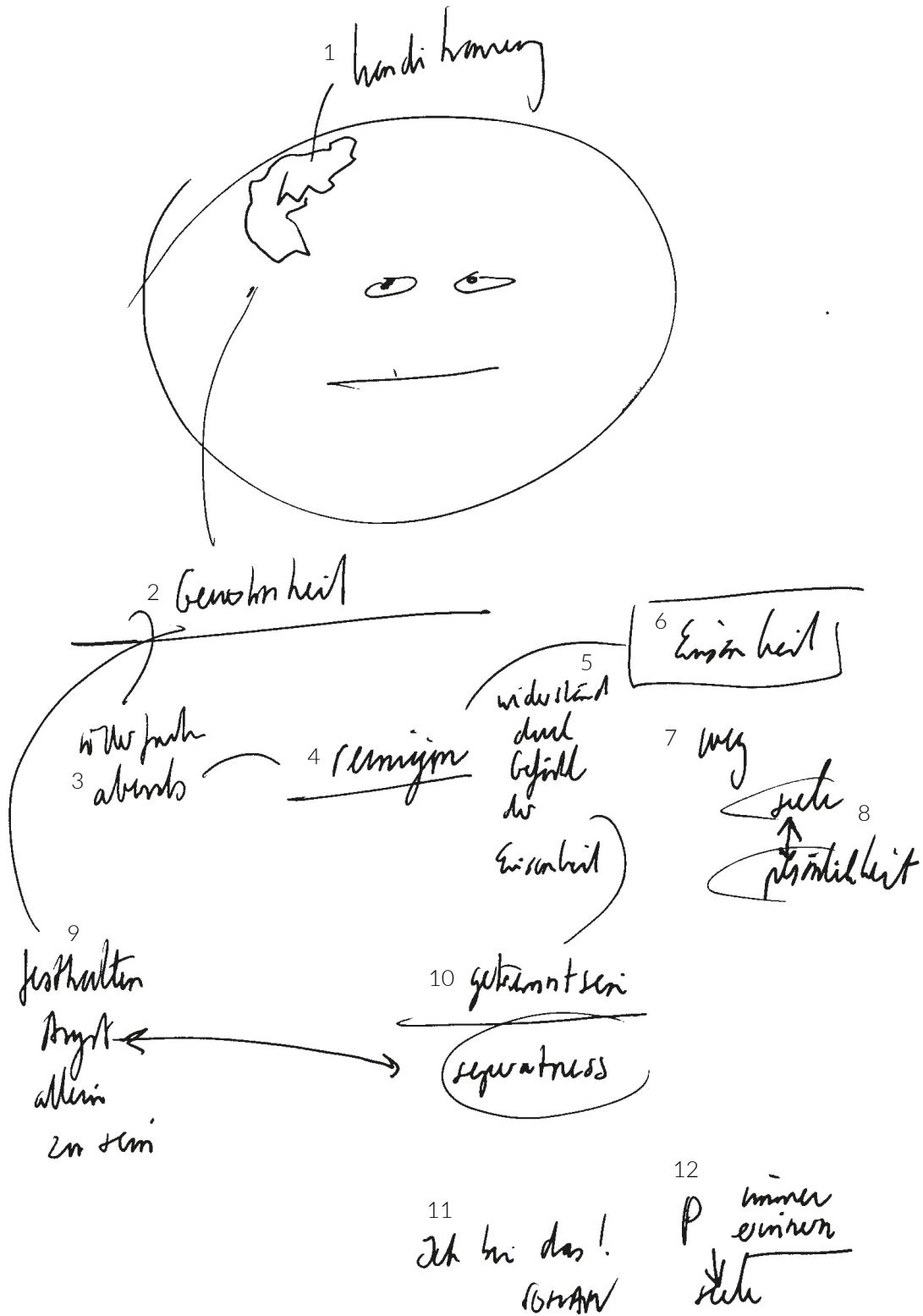
**At the end, the singing bowl is struck 3 times**

### Primary literature used for the lessons

No primary literature was referenced in this teaching module.



We are conditioned, but we can also free ourselves from this.



<sup>1</sup> conditioning | <sup>2</sup> habit | <sup>3</sup> early in the morning, evenings | <sup>4</sup> cleaning | <sup>5</sup> resistance due to feelings of loneliness | <sup>6</sup> loneliness | <sup>7</sup> way | <sup>8</sup> soul, personality | <sup>9</sup> holding on, fear of being alone | <sup>10</sup> separateness | <sup>11</sup> I am that! So'ham | <sup>12</sup> P, soul, always remember

## Mantra meditation “So’ham” / “I am That”

One form that was added to the curriculum much later – and therefore rarely appears in the student’s meditation journal notes to date, is meditation with the mantra “So’ham”, one of the main mantras of the Siddha Yoga tradition and means “I am That.”<sup>12</sup>

“*So’ham* is the natural mantra, the mantra of the Self. It does not belong to the East or the West or to any religion. *So’ham* is inherent in all of us; it repeats itself continually, along with our breathing. [...] The breath goes out with the sound *so* and comes in with the sound *ham*. Every time the breath goes out and comes in, one repetition of the *So’ham* mantra takes place.”<sup>13</sup> It is also important to pay attention to the moments of silence that occur during breathing. “Between the inhalation and the exhalation, and between the exhalation and the inhalation, there is a fraction of a second which is absolutely still and free of thought. That space is the space of the Truth. When you breathe in and out, listening to *ham* and *so*, you should focus on that space for as long as it lasts. As you practice the technique, the space will gradually expand.”<sup>14</sup>

This mantra meditation was made popular in the West primarily by the Indian spiritual teacher Swami Muktananda (1908-1982), and his teachings are passed on today by his successor Swami Chidvilasananda.

### Instructions

#### Strike the singing bowl once

Sit upright but relaxed, eyes closed

Breathe in and out consciously and calmly.

The breath comes and goes by itself. Completely relaxed.

Now silently repeat the mantra

On the exhale *So*, on the inhale *Ham*.

Let the sound *So* flow out with the breath.

Let the sound *Ham* flow in with the breath.

Pay attention also to the moments of silence and stillness between exhaling and inhaling and inhaling and exhaling.

#### Strike the singing bowl from time to time

From time to time repeat: “On the exhale *So*, on the inhale *Ham*”.

To signal the end of the exercise, strike the singing bowl 3 times

### Primary literature used for the lessons

Chidvilasananda, Swami (Gurumayi) (1995). *Inner Treasures*. South Fallsburg: SYDA Foundation.

Muktananda, Swami (1999). *Meditate. Happiness Lies Within You*. South Fallsburg: SYDA Foundation.

Muktananda, Swami (1989). *Where Are You Going? A Guide to the Spiritual Journey*. South Fallsburg: SYDA Foundation.

## Beyond thoughts

Here follows an exercise from the teachings of Nisargadatta Maharaj (1897-1981), introduced by his long-time student and the founder of quantum psychology, Stephen H. Wolinsky, Ph.D., in the film *I am that I am. Experience the teachings of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj*.<sup>15</sup>

### Instructions

(Original text Stephen H. Wolinsky, Ph.D.)

#### The singing bowl is struck once, if desired

What is the “I am”?

To give you an experience of what the “I am” is, I want to ask you as the listener to “let your eyes close for a moment.”

Without using your thoughts, memory, emotions, associations or perceptions, are you a man, a woman or neither?

If you do not use your thoughts, memory, emotions, associations or perceptions, are you defined, undefined or neither?

Without using your thoughts, memory, emotions, associations or perceptions, are you limited, unlimited or neither?

If you do not use your thoughts, memory, emotions, associations or perceptions, are you in a body, out a body, or neither?

When you do not use your thoughts, memory, emotions, associations or perceptions, notice the no-state state of the “I am”. Without thoughts, memories, emotions, associations or perceptions.

In a moment I will ask you to open your eyes, just come back to the room a part of your awareness back there in the no-state state, without thoughts, memory, emotions, associations and perceptions.

And when you let your eyes open, a part of your awareness can be back here in the room, so you are splitting your awareness in two directions.

Maharaj spoke about the “I am” in terms of the verbal “I am” and the non-verbal “I am”. For example: the verbal “I am” would be “I am good. I am bad. I am smart. I’m stupid, or whatever!”

He said, cut that out first and just stick with the “I am”; let go of “bad, good, whatever shows up and just stick with the verbal ‘I am’.”

Without your thoughts, memory, emotions, associations or perceptions, you have what he would have called the non-verbal “I am”.

Let’s go over it again.

Let your eyes close for a moment.

If you do not use your thoughts, memory, emotions, associations or perceptions, are you perfect, imperfect or neither?

If you don't use your thoughts, memory, emotions, associations or perceptions, what does the word perfect or imperfect even mean?

If you do not use your thoughts, memory, emotions, associations or perceptions, are you worthy or unworthy or neither?

If you do not use your thoughts, memory, emotions, associations or perceptions, what does worthy or unworthy even mean?

If you do not use your thoughts, memory, emotions, associations, or perceptions, are you alone, connected, or neither?

If you do not use your thoughts, memory, emotions, associations, or perceptions, what does alone or connection even mean?

When you do not use your thoughts, memory, emotions, associations, or perceptions, are you powerful, powerless, or neither?

If you do not use your thoughts, memory, emotions, associations, or perceptions, what does powerful or powerless even mean?

Slowly we open our eyes again ...

**The singing bowl is struck 3 times, if desired**

After a short moment of silence, a reflective conversation can now follow, to discuss how the participants experienced the exercise. First in groups of two, then in the entire group session.

Nisardgadatta Maharaj repeatedly said that everything you know about yourself comes from the outside and is defined, and therefore advocated that one take the path inside to meet one's own true Self.

A student, in tears, once remarked after the exercise that during it she suddenly experienced how much she had allowed herself be influenced by others thus far in her life, through so many external opinions, ie: how she should look, how she should behave or what she should later become.

I once did this exercise as part of a seminar for managers. Answering my question as to how the participants experienced the exercise, one sitting next to me remarked, "It was completely silent." He was so deeply impressed by that moment that he subsequently said almost nothing during the entire seminar. Some students are also impressed and pleasantly surprised that they are able to go beyond their thoughts, even for a short moment.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gunaratana 2019a, p. 23 f. and p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> Gunaratana 2019a, p. 92; An introduction to Vipassana meditation is given by Gunaratana, 2019a.

<sup>3</sup> A brief description of breathing meditation exercises can be found in Ricard 2015c, p. 75 ff; Ott 2015, p. 49 ff. and Kabat-Zinn 2013, p. 39 ff. For short forms of meditation in connection with breath, see also text module Sutras, p. 159 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Gunaratana 2019a, p. 110 f.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Main 2014, p. 14 f.

<sup>6</sup> See Devananda 1981, p. 44 f.; “The root ‘man’ in the word Mantra comes from the first syllable of that word meaning ‘to think’ and ‘tra’ from ‘tra’ meaning ‘to protect or free’ from the bondage of the phenomenal world. A Mantra generates the creative force and bestows eternal Bliss. A Mantra when constantly repeated awakens the consciousness.” (Swami Sivananda in Devananda 1981, p. 44)

<sup>7</sup> See Main 2014, p. 84 f.; see also the website: [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org).

<sup>8</sup> Main 2014, p. 12 f.

<sup>9</sup> Main 2014, p. 10; see also Main 2011, p. 107.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Main 2014, p. 12 f.; see also Main 2011, p. 28 f. and p. 108.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Main 2014, p. 11.

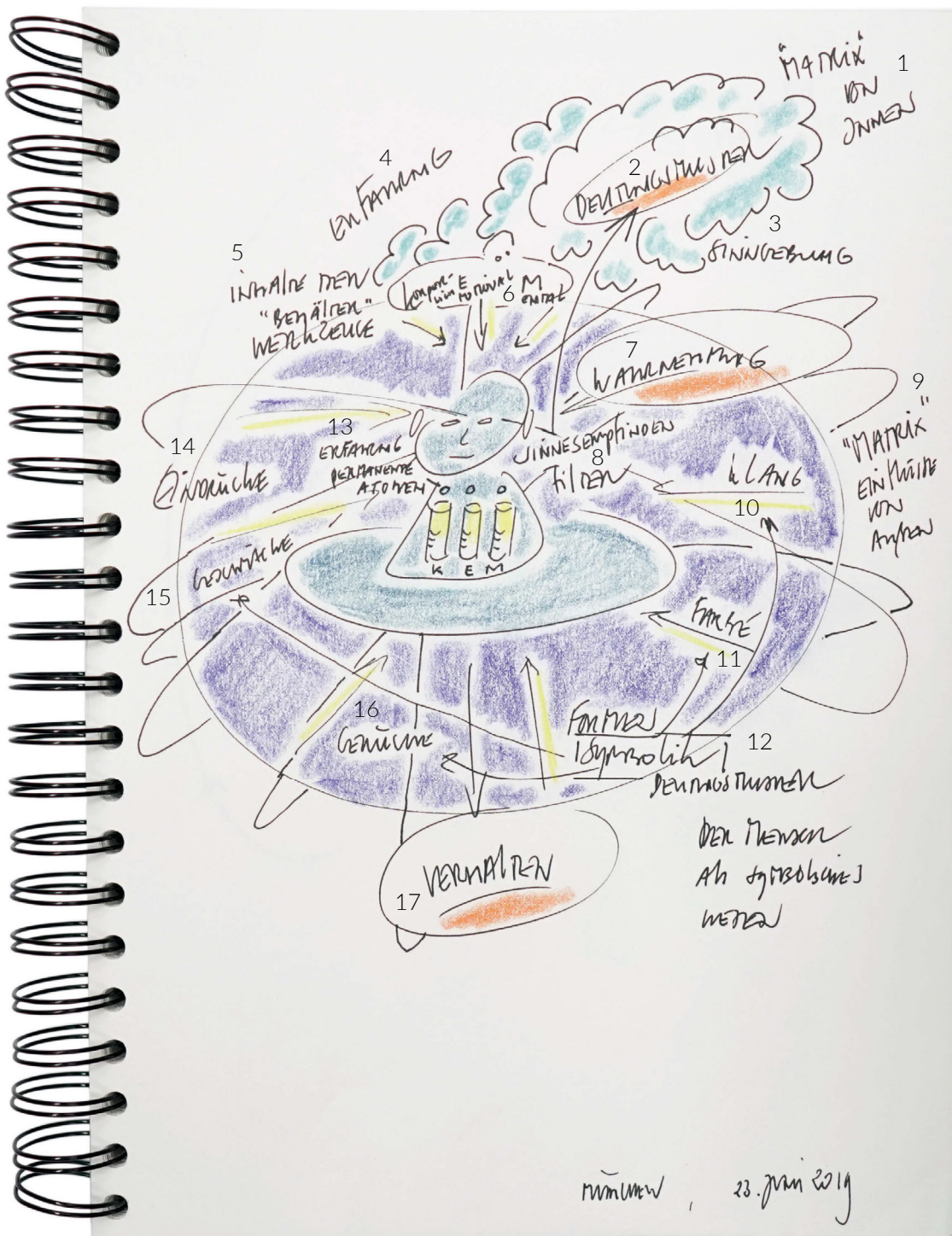
<sup>12</sup> Muktananda 1989, p. 98 as well as p. 131 and p. 200. See also Chidvilasananda 1995, p. 71; “*Ham*, the syllable that comes in with the inhalation, is the supreme ‘I’-consciousness, the perfect ‘I am’, which is God. So the syllable that goes out with the exhalation, is God’s power, Shakti, which takes the form of the universe.” (Muktananda 1989, p. 99)

<sup>13</sup> Muktananda 1989, p. 98. Here one also finds a guide to the practice of So’ham.

<sup>14</sup> Muktananda 1989, 99 f.

<sup>15</sup> See the film: *I Am That I Am. Experience the Teachings of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj – Part 1* (2009, 7:33-16:39 min.). See as well: Wolinsky, Stephen H. (2010). “Nisargadatta Maharaj / Experiential Meditation”, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE6kS7vVsXw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE6kS7vVsXw) (accessed September 13, 2020). This exercise is reprinted with the kind permission of Stephen H. Wolinsky, Ph.D.

Influences that condition us.



<sup>1</sup> inner matrix | <sup>2</sup> PATTERNS OF INTERPRETATION | <sup>3</sup> meaning | <sup>4</sup> experience | <sup>5</sup> contents of the "container" vehicles | <sup>6</sup> body, emotional, mental | <sup>7</sup> PERCEPTION | <sup>8</sup> sensory perception; filter | <sup>9</sup> "Matrix" influences from the outside | <sup>10</sup> sound | <sup>11</sup> color | <sup>12</sup> shapes; symbolism; thought patterns; man as a symbolic being | <sup>13</sup> experience; permanent atoms | <sup>14</sup> impressions | <sup>15</sup> tastes | <sup>16</sup> smells | <sup>17</sup> BEHAVIOUR



26.5.2019: Sitzmeditation

Ich habe nach dem Aufstehen 10 Minuten eine Meditation im Sitzen durchgeführt. Es hat mir sehr geholfen meine Gedanken zu ordnen und mit einem klaren Kopf in den Tag zu starten.

30.5.2019: Geräuschmeditation

Ich war in den Bergen beim Wandern und habe bei einem Stop auf dem Gipfel versucht meine Umwelt und vor allem die Geräusche bewusst und achtsam wahrzunehmen. Es war eine schöne Erfahrung diesen Moment ein wenig mehr zu schätzen und wahrzunehmen als ich es normalerweise getan hätte. Für diese Übung habe ich mir ungefähr 5 Minuten Zeit genommen.

3.5.2019: Sitzmeditation

Ich habe die Meditation nach dem Nachtdienst für 15 Minuten durchgeführt, um meinen Kopf von den vielen Gedanken und Eindrücken der Arbeit freizubekommen. Dies ist mir gut gelungen und hat mir geholfen danach besser zu schlafen.

10.07.17 16:40 → ca. 25 min.: Ashwa

Meditationsraum UHG - Meditationskissen

Ich meditiere gerne mit den Meditationskissen. Da hat mein automatisch eine aufrechte Haltung während den Meditationen. Also versuchte ich in einen bequemen Sitz zu kommen und dann erlaube die Klangschale. Ich hörte dem Klang der Schale lange nach, dann richtete ich meine Sinne nach innen. Ich konzentrierte mich auf mein drittes Auge. Ich stellte mir vor, wie von dem Auge ein helles Licht durch meinen ganzen Körper leuchtet. Irgendwann im Laufe der Übung schwirren mir ein paar Gedanken durch den Kopf und ich spürte wie taub mein rechter Unterschenkel war. Ich bewegte ihn und merkte, dass er eingeschlafen war. Zum Glück ertönte die Klangschale dreimal. Ich löste meine Sitzposition und lockerte das Bein. Bis auf das Ende der Übung konnte ich aber ganz gut meditieren.

11.07.17 15:00 → ca. 30 min.: Mantra

Matte - im Garten bei mir zuhause

Es gibt Tage, da gelingt einem gar nichts. Es gibt Tage, da stelle ich mich und mein aktuelles Tun in Frage. Solche Selbstzweifel habe ich oft vor Prüfungssituationen. Da stehe ich sozusagen neben mir. Dieser Dienstag war genau so ein Tag. Ich war negativ gestimmt. Deshalb nahm ich mir eine Auszeit, legte mich auf unsere Terrasse auf eine Matte auf den Rücken. Ich schloss meine Augen und sagte mir immer "Ich liebe mich" vor meinem inneren Geiste. Am Anfang war es schwer, das so immer wieder zu denken, aber nach einer Zeit kullerten leise Tränen über meine Gesicht und allmählich breitete sich ein warmes Gefühl in mir aus. Die Übung tat mir wirklich gut, da ich mir Zeit nahm und auch mal meine Seele weinen ließ und ihr zuhörte.



# Journal Notes

## Sitting Meditations

A. B.

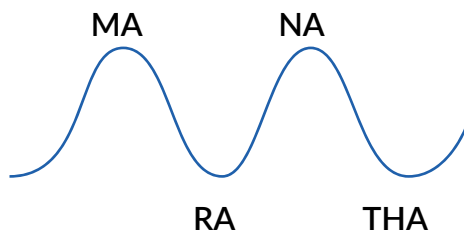
**Time:** 2:15–3:45 p.m. (10+5+5 minutes)

**Place:** Meditation room of the KHG (sitting)

**Method:** MA-RA-NA-THA, deep contemplation, first aid for difficult thoughts

**Utensils:** singing bowl, thought: “waves”, CD

At the beginning of our session today we meditated for 10 minutes each in our own way. I was able to get my head free of thoughts, and I thought only twice very briefly about food and the sounds from outside in the form of birdsong and street noise. I also noticed the smell in the meditation room very strongly. It smelled like the mats we were sitting on. I had never really noticed this smell before. As I recited the mantra to myself, I thought of waves going up as I inhaled and down as I exhaled.



After the meditation we did two smaller exercises from the CD from the meditation book for children. The exercises were totally unsuitable for me because the speaker spoke too fast and I didn't have time to think clearly.

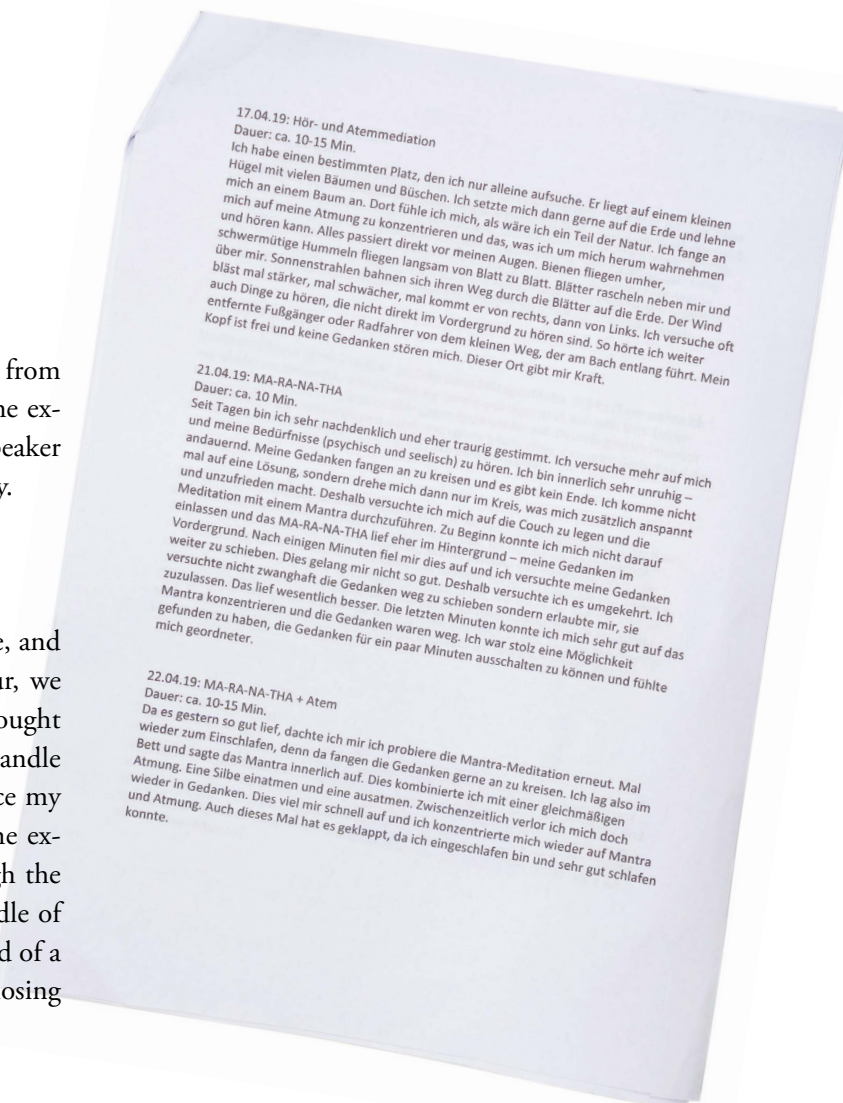
A. v. W.

10/24/19–10/30/19

I asked my mother if she'd like to meditate with me, and she agreed. In the afternoon, around half past four, we sat down on blankets on the living room floor. I thought it would be nice to light a candle. We placed the candle in the middle, between us on the coffee table. Since my mother had never meditated before, I explained the exercise to her by concentrating on breathing through the nose. I myself concentrated on a point in the middle of my forehead. We meditated for five minutes. Instead of a singing bowl, I simply said, “We will now begin, closing our eyes.”

When I asked my mother how it had been for her, she said that at the beginning it was hard for her to think of nothing, and therefore she often [thought] “think of nothing”. But towards the end she concentrated exclusively on her breathing, paying more attention to the chest area.

It went quite well for me, but I think I was a bit excited because I thought several times about how it was for my mother. Maybe I just wasn't calm and composed. Before that, we had coffee and went for a walk, which is why I might not have been able to completely relax. In any case, I found myself thinking about my mother several times. I could imagine that some students think about their classmates while meditating together in class.



**C. M.****5/26/19 – sitting meditation**

After getting up, I did a meditation for 10 minutes while sitting down. It helped me to organize my thoughts very well and to start the day with a clear head.

**5/3/19 – sitting meditation**

I did the meditation after the night shift for 15 minutes, to clear my head from the many thoughts and impressions from work. This worked well for me and helped me to sleep better afterwards.

**F. E.**

I actually like the Breathing Meditation best, because it is the easiest to do and can be applied anywhere (bus, train, bicycle, walking ...). It can also be done quickly in between [activities], so that you can switch off for a moment and then concentrate on one thing again. Sometimes it's hard not to pay attention to your thoughts, so I find it easier to meditate in the evening when you've already finished the day to some extent, than earlier in the day when you think about all the things you might be doing or need to do.

I have also practiced the Ajna center meditation several times [...]. As a mantra, instead of MA-RA-NA-THA, I have always thought up my own motivational sayings, which I have said to myself, for example: "Today is a beautiful day", "I can do everything I want to do today". This was then internalized, and these days went really well!

**F. S.****4/21/19, MA-RA-NA-THA****Duration: approx. 10 min.**

For days I have been very pensive and rather sad. I try to listen more to myself and my needs (psychologically and emotionally). I am very restless inside all the time. My thoughts begin to circle and there's no end [to them]. I can't even find a solution, so then I just go round in circles, which makes me more tense and dissatisfied.

So I tried to lie down on the couch and do the meditation with a mantra. In the beginning I couldn't get into it, and the MA-RA-NA-THA ran just in the background with my thoughts in the foreground. After a few minutes I noticed this and I tried to push my thoughts further away. I didn't succeed very well. So I tried it the other way 'round. I no longer tried to compulsively push the thoughts away, but allowed myself to let them be. That went much better.

In the final minutes I was able to concentrate very well on the mantra and the thoughts were gone. I was proud to have found a way to switch off the thoughts for a few minutes and felt more self-composed.

**4/22/19, MA-RA-NA-THA + breath****Duration: approx. 10–15 min.**

Since it went so well yesterday, I thought I'd again try the mantra meditation to fall asleep, because that's when the thoughts like to start circling. So I lay in bed and said the mantra inside. I combined this with a steady breathing. Inhaling on one syllable and exhaling on one. In the meantime I lost myself in thought again. I noticed this quickly and concentrated again on the mantra and breathing. This time it also worked, because I fell asleep and was able to sleep very well.

**L. K. M.**

For 10 minutes I meditated on a bench at the Nordfriedhof. I used the breathing meditation and concentrated on my nostrils. At the beginning of the meditation I digressed – I noticed that I tried to use the free time to order my thoughts. With time, however, I was more successful in letting my thoughts pass.

In retrospect, I noticed that I concentrated less on breathing and more on the sounds of nature (the chirping, rustling) around me. Before that I went to the cemetery to jog. Therefore I felt strained going into meditation. Afterwards I had a very pleasant feeling and realized that I was calm and relaxed.

I sat down in my room for 10 minutes and closed the door behind me. This time I concentrated on the Mantra MA-RA-NA-THA. I succeeded in doing this at the beginning of the meditation as well. I was able to imagine the word before my eyes and concentrate on it. In the course of the meditation, however, I digressed again and again. I noticed how I used the time of rest to order my thoughts and to calm down. For the next meditation, I therefore decided to plan fixed times for meditation at the beginning of the week, so that I don't feel that I'm otherwise lacking the time.

besser meine Gedanken vorbeiziehen zu lassen. Im Dachhinein fiel mir auf, dass ich mich weniger auf die Atmung, sondern auf die Naturgeräusche (das Zwitschern, Rascheln) um mich herum konzentriere. Zwar war ich zum Beginn auf dem Friedhof. Deshalb ging ich angestrengt in die Meditation. Im Anschluss habe ich ein sehr wichtiges Gefühl und merkte, dass ich ruhig und entspannt

Ich habe mich für 10min in mein Zimmer gesetzt und die Tür hinter mir geschlossen. Dieses mal habe ich mich auf das Mantra „ta-ta-ta“ konzentriert. Dies gelang mir zu Beginn der Meditation gut. Ich konnte mir das Wort vor meinen Augen vorstellen und mich so darauf konzentrieren. Im Verlauf der Meditation schweifte ich allerdings immer wieder ab. Ich

die Zeit der Ruhe nutze um meine Gedanken zu ordnen und ruhe zu kommen. Für die nächste Meditation nahm ich nur deshalb vor, schon bei Worbeginn erste Gedanken für die Meditation einzuparieren, so dass ich nicht das Gefühl habe, dass mir die Zeit an einer anderen Stelle fehlt.

Ich sitze in meinem Zimmer auf dem Boden auf einer Decke. Als Hilfsmittel nutze ich außerdem meinen Handywecker, den ich auf 10min einstelle. Ich möchte eine Atemmeditation machen. Ich merkte jedoch schon nach kurzer Zeit, dass ich abschweifte und mich nicht konzentrieren kam. Da ich starke Kopfschmerzen habe, fange ich an mich auf den

Für 10min habe ich auf einer Bank auf dem Nordfriedhof meditiert. Dabei habe ich die Atemmeditation angewendet und mich auf meine Nasenflügel konzentriert. Zu Beginn der Meditation schweifte ich ab - ich merkte, dass ich die freie Zeit zu nutzen versuchte, eine Gedanken zu machen. Mit der Zeit gelang es mir jedoch



**L. R.****7/11/17, 3:00–3:30 p.m., Mantra****Mat in the garden at my home**

There are days when nothing succeeds at all. There are days when I question myself and my current actions. I often have such self-doubt before exam situations. There I stand beside myself, so to speak. This Tuesday was just such a day. I was in a negative mood. That's why I took some time off and lay down on my back on a mat on our terrace. I closed my eyes and continuously told myself "I love me" in front of my inner spirit. In the beginning it was hard to keep thinking it over and over again, but after a while soft tears rolled down my face and gradually a warm feeling spread inside me. The exercise was really good for me, because I took my time and sometimes I let my soul cry and listened to it.

**M. N.****4/12/19****Duration approx. 30 min. in total**

At the end of the week I took a lot of time to meditate. First I started with the breathing meditation, but I got tired quickly and after about 5 minutes I fell asleep for a few seconds.

Afterwards it was clear to me: even if I'm tired, I should meditate with a mantram. So I continued with "Maranatha", which helped me to relax without falling asleep. I noticed how I became more relaxed and the thoughts came down on me like a sprinkle of rain, grazing me slightly but never quite hitting me.

**P. S.****12/17/16, about 10 minutes, at my home****Result: sitting meditation (mantra)**

I felt totally tired and indecisive today. I still had so many thoughts in my head about presents for Christmas. Who should I give presents to? How should I wrap the presents? What is still missing? I took another 10 minutes and withdrew from everyday life. The mantra is somehow stored in my subconscious, so I can recall it relatively quickly. The rhythm of speaking the individual syllables is also balancing. The individual syllables appear before my eyes as if I were singing karaoke. As I hoped, the minutes (a little time out) did me good and I was then able to wrap the remaining presents.

12.04.2019  
 Zum Abschluss der Woche habe ich mir heute  
 einmal viel Zeit genommen zum Meditieren.  
 Zuerst habe ich mit der Atem-Meditation begonnen,  
 wurde aber schnell müde und bin nach ca. 5 min  
 kurz für ein paar Sekunden eingeschlafen.  
 Danach war mir klar: Wenn ich müde bin - Auf alle  
 Fälle mit Mantram meditieren. Also machte ich mit  
 "Maranatha" weiter, was mir hilft zu entspannen  
 ohne einzuschlafen. Ich merkte wie ich mehr zur  
 Ruhe kam und die Gedanken wie bei schwachem  
 Regen auf mich herabrieselten, mich leicht streifen,  
 aber nie ganz trafen.  
 Dauer ca. 30 min insgesamt.



# Mindfulness in Daily Life



<sup>1</sup> achtsames spühlen

<sup>2</sup> mind wandern

<sup>3</sup> glückliches

Mindfully wash the dishes.

- <sup>1</sup> mindful dishwashing
- <sup>2</sup> mind-wandering
- <sup>3</sup> happy

The main purpose of mindfulness is the conscious experience of the present moment from an authentic inner attitude, observing it with detachment rather than cognitively evaluating what is happening.

In order to clarify the meaning of mindfulness, I begin the lesson with a practical exercise – introduced to me by my colleague Niko Kohls during a guest lecture – and I have incorporated it into my teaching ever since. The exercise is called: “Drawing/painting your own face with the opposite hand” and is performed as follows:

Moderator: “Take out a piece of paper and a pencil to write.”  
 Moderator: “Who is right-handed? Who is left-handed? Those who are right-handed draw with their left hand and those who are left-handed draw with their right hand.  
 What you are going to draw is your own face.”

*In order to really be in contact with our here and now –  
 wherever it may be – we have to pause in our perception  
 until the present moment can sink into us –  
 until we really feel the present moment,  
 until we see it in its full extent until we become aware of it  
 and thereby get to know and understand it better.*

Jon Kabat-Zinn

There's usually a little laughter and giggling at first, but this is followed by a deep concentration among the participants and it becomes very quiet in the room.

At some point the first students finish, and it gets louder again.

After a while the exercise ends.

Moderator: "Are you satisfied with your work of art? If you wish, you can show it to your neighbor."

[Students laugh]

Moderator: "What have we actually been doing just now? Did you notice how quiet it suddenly was in the room? Why was that?"

Respondent 1: "One really had to concentrate."

Respondent 2: "It was something new."

Moderator: "Did you think about anything else during the exercise? How concentrated were you?"

This is followed by a transition to a description of mindfulness. I present, among others, a definition by Jon Kabat-Zinn, the pioneer of the mindfulness movement. At this point, I also touch upon the subject of the wandering mind (see KNA interview, p. 123, and section "Research", p. 46 f.).

Mindfulness in everyday life can be practiced, for example, by reminding or asking yourself from time to time whether you *are present in this moment*. In class, I sometimes brought in this aspect of being present in everyday life at the beginning: "What did you see or perceive today that you otherwise would not have paid attention to?"

There are so many activities that we can do more consciously, such as eating, cooking, washing dishes, tidying up, cleaning, walking, brushing teeth, ironing and much more. If we reduce mind-wandering, we are more present in the moment and the quality of the experience becomes more intense. At this point I often refer to Bronnie Ware's book *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying* and why it is so important, here and now, to maintain this alert presence.

In the following, further mindfulness exercises are presented in separate text modules:



## Primary literature used for the lessons

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To be  
in the moment  
means  
to create space.

<sup>1</sup> space

Punkt zwischen meinen Augenbrauen zu konzentrieren. Hier merke ich allerdings, dass der Druck nach einer Weile immer stärker wird. Den Rest der Zeit sitze ich nur da und lasse die Gedanken schweifen. Danach fühle ich mich trotzdem entspannter und beruhigter. Ich merke jedoch, dass es wichtig für mich ist einen Wecker zu haben oder nur die Zeit vorgibt

Ich meditiere in der S-Bahn auf der Strecke von Pasing an den Hauptbahnhof. Dabei meditiere ich mit der Atemmeditation. Ich merke, dass mir die Meditation zu Beginn gut gelingt. Ich kann mich auf meine Nasenflügel konzentrieren und meine Gedanken bewirke schieben. Dann beginne ich mich aber auf die Ansagen in der S-Bahn zu

Übungen beschrieben habe. Ich fühle mich jedes Mal nach Durchführung dieser Meditationsform ruhiger und gelassener, deshalb versuche ich die Übung immer abends durchzuführen, damit mich die Ereignisse des Tages nicht mehr beschäftigen.

### 15. Meditation

23.11.2014, 19.05Uhr

Diesmal rezitierte ich das Maranatha Mantra, als ich im Zug auf dem Weg zu meiner Freundin saß.

Ich habe den ganzen Tag mein Mathematik Übungsblatt bearbeitet und war deshalb noch sehr in Gedanken an Mathe versunken. Durch die Meditation wollte ich aus diesen Gedanken "herauskommen".

Im Zug zu meditieren fiel mir relativ schwer. Es war sehr laut durch die Gespräche der Mitreisenden und durch das Poltern des Zuges auf den Schienen, aber diese Geräuschkulisse hat mich wider Erwarten nicht besonders gestört. Mein größtes Problem, um mich in die Meditation zu versenken war, dass ich mich von den Mitreisenden beobachtet gefühlt habe und dadurch konnte ich nicht vollkommen von meinen Gedanken loslassen.

Nach der etwa 12-minütigen Übung fühle ich mich dennoch besser und befreiter, jedoch bei weitem nicht so gut wie nach den anderen Übungen in meinem Zimmer. Allerdings denke ich, dass man es trainieren kann, im Zug zu meditieren und es dann immer besser funktioniert.

### 16. Meditation

24.11.2014, im Seminar

In dieser Sitzung vom Seminar haben wir die Übung Bodyscan durchgeführt. Dabei lagen wir auf Matten auf dem Boden und Herr de Bruin hat uns durch die Übung geführt, indem er vorgegeben hat, auf welchen Körperteil wir uns fokussieren sollen. Mir fällt es wesentlich leichter mich auf die einzelnen Stationen beim Bodyscan zu konzentrieren, wenn eine Person dies vorgibt. Ich kann die Übung dann sehr konzentriert durchführen und werde dadurch sehr gelassen, auch dieses Mal bin ich nach der Übung sehr entspannt und müde gewesen. Was noch auffällig

18.05.2019 → Dusche

- schon den ganzen Tag Kopfschmerzen...
- beim Duschen fällt mir ein, ACHTSAM zu sein
- Bewusstes Ausdrücken der Shampoo-Flasche
- Shampoo in der Hand spüren
- riechen, auf dem Kopf fühlen
- Bewusstes Einmassieren in die Haare
- kreisende Bewegungen in verschiedenen Richtungen mit unterschiedlichem Druck
- ↳ Massage & Achtsamkeitsübung entspannen mich total

# Journal Notes

## Mindfulness in Daily Life

### H. V.

#### **Meditating in the church**

It is Easter. I was in church, but there was no service. I was alone there. It was beautiful. As I sat down on the bench, I felt very comfortable.

I closed my eyes and meditated for a few minutes with Maranatha. It was one of my most successful attempts to meditate. I was totally with myself, not distracted, and I had the feeling that I was additionally supported by the environment.

When I came out of the church, I felt so fulfilled and it was coming from within myself! I don't often feel this way.

### J. H.

**When:** 5/15/17

**Where:** a friend's apartment

**What:** washing the dishes

**How long:** 15-20 min

Today was my chance! I was invited to a friend's house and we actually wanted to cook. But his kitchen [sink] was still full of unwashed dishes. At first, for a short time, everyone complained – but then I said that I would take care of it and that I would wash them mindfully. They looked at me as though very surprised, but of course they didn't mind, because they then didn't have to do it. Of the mindfulness exercises in the household, I have to say that I like the washing up best. At some point, one of them asked me if I was seriously still engaged with it. But one gets totally lost in it! And what I like best is that it's possible to observe a "direct" effect. At the end you see what you've "done" when the dishes are clean.

Everybody was satisfied, and then we started cooking and made the dishes dirty again ;-)

### L. J.

**5/18/19, shower**

- Headaches all day long.
- While showering I remember to be mindful.
- Consciously squeezing the shampoo bottle.
- Feeling the shampoo in [my] hand, smelling it, feeling it on [my] head.

- Consciously massaging into the hair.
- Circling movements in different directions with different pressure.
- Massage and mindfulness exercises relax me completely.

### L. K. M.

I meditate on the S-Bahn [commuter train], on the route from Pasing to the main station. I meditate using the breath meditation. I notice that the meditation works well in the beginning. I can concentrate on my nostrils and push my thoughts aside.

But then I start to concentrate on the announcements on the S-Bahn [train] so that I don't miss my exit. From then on my concentration is gone. Here I again realize that I need to consciously set a specific time for meditation. Nevertheless the short focus on myself already calms me down.

### M. H.

**11/23/14, 7:05 p.m.**

This time I recited the Maranatha mantra while I was on the train on my way to [see] my girlfriend.

I worked on my math exercise sheet all day long and was therefore still very much absorbed in math thoughts. Through meditation I intended to "get out of" these thoughts.

It was relatively difficult for me to meditate on the train. Due to the conversations of fellow passengers and the rumbling of the train on the rails, it was very loud, but contrary to my expectations this background noise didn't bother me very much. My biggest problem in immersing myself in meditation was that I felt observed by my fellow passengers and therefore I couldn't completely let go of my thoughts.

After the 12-minute exercise I still felt better and more liberated, but not nearly as good as after the other exercises in my room. However, I think that you can train yourself to meditate on the train and it then works better and better.

# “Making Space for What’s Important”

## Interview Catholic News Agency

Among others published in: Altöttinger Liebfrauenbote, No. 2 – January 12, 2020, p. 5. interview: Denise Thomas (CNA)

*While the world moves ever faster and faster, one trend has the potential to counteract it: mindfulness. Andreas de Bruin has made mindful living his profession. He teaches and conducts research on the effects of mindfulness and meditation at the Munich University of Applied Sciences and the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU) in Munich, and is the initiator of the “Munich Model”, an initiative to integrate mindful, meditative content into the context of university education. In an interview, he explains the phenomenon of mindfulness.*

**Mr. de Bruin, what exactly does mindfulness mean?**

Mindfulness means consciously perceiving the current state – just observing, not evaluating, seeing things anew. This can be related to physical reactions, thoughts, emotions or our direct environment, such as other people and nature.

**Why do you think there is this mindfulness boom?**

We have overshot the goal: too much individualism and emphasis on our own ideals at the expense of others, over consumption, the hectic pace of life, our loss of connection to the natural environment. The mind and intellect have also been assigned too much importance. The heart and love have fallen by the wayside. Mindfulness helps many people to relax and to come closer to their true self. The common good also regains its importance. Mindfulness exercises are also easy to practice. There are a variety of practices so that everyone can try out what suits them best. No costs are involved, so it’s available to everyone. And last but not least, even without extensive practice, one can experience the effects fairly quickly.

**What effects, for example?**

For example, improvement in mental hygiene, body awareness, concentration and selective awareness, self-efficacy, well-being and the regulation of emotions. If one combines mindfulness with exercises in compassion, it can improve the way you interact with yourself and your environment. The respected neuroscientist and mindfulness researcher, Richard Davidson says that, “Earth would be a different place if we spent the same short amount of time caring for our minds as we do brushing our teeth.” If one intensifies one’s own practice and practices regularly, the effects are more lasting.



Mindfulness is easy to incorporate into everyday life. Many everyday activities are well suited to this, for example eating, walking, talking to someone, cleaning, ironing clothes, washing dishes, listening to nature and much more. But you can also practice more structured exercises, such as sitting in silence for 15 to 20 minutes a day and watching the breath in a relaxed manner, or the “body scan” – a relaxation method in which you “wander” through your own body step by step with your attention and feel into the different parts of your body. The important thing is not to do all of this in a too intellectual and mechanical way, for example thinking, “I have to eat carefully now, I have to breathe carefully now.” The desire to be mindful should come from within. Mindfulness is an attitude. In the Christian tradition, for example, there are different forms of seeing: seeing through the senses, seeing through the mind and seeing with the heart. It is about this latter dimension. When mindfulness is combined with the heart, the practice becomes completely natural.

**You said that the exercises are easy to practice. What does this look like in everyday life?**

When most people wash dishes, their heads are somewhere else. Mindful dishwashing is: I observe that I’m washing, I feel that the water is warm, or it’s cold, how does the plate or the glass that I’m washing feel in my hands? When we learn to do these things more consciously again, we train our “muscles of awareness” so that we are more in the now with everything we do.

**How does mindful dishwashing work, for example?**

Research shows that in everyday life, we aren’t paying attention, we aren’t paying attention to what we are doing nearly half of the time. Through conscious awareness we can be more in the now, and the so-called mind-wandering – that is, the wandering of our thoughts – is reduced, so one is less distracted, recognizes more clearly what is important in life and acts accordingly. If you ask people who are in the process of dying what they regret most looking back at their lives, they say they would have liked to express more of their feelings, to have maintained more contact with friends, to have not worked so much and had the courage to live life that way as they would have liked. Mindfulness helps to make more space for what’s important. By not judging, we also learn to first pause in situations, and not to react too impulsively.

**Why should we be more mindful in our everyday life?**

I meditate for 20 minutes twice a day – one sitting meditation immediately after getting up and the other in late afternoon, usually at 5 p.m. I’ve been doing this since 1991. And, like brushing my teeth, it has become a routine. I also try to carry out many everyday activities more attentively, such as during my daily commute to work or in conversations with my students.

**Do you have daily mindfulness rituals yourself?**



Mindfully  
eating a raisin



# Mindful Cooking and Eating

*Learning to eat and live mindfully  
is the key to experiencing  
health and peace.*

Thich Nhat Hanh / Lilian Cheung

As a practice of mindfulness, mindful cooking and eating is primarily about creating a space to pause and be aware of the present moment. It means concentrating fully on the preparation of the meal and then also as you eat the food. This also entails taking an interest in these processes, devoting our full attention to them.

For example, when cutting the vegetables, we can pay attention to the slices that we cut piece by piece, to their shape and texture, as well as the respective colors that become visible. We can also perceive the sound as we cut them, or their smell, which may develop in intensity as we pay attention. When we cook rice, we can observe the steam in the pot and hear the water boiling. As we consciously eat, we likewise engage all our senses.

Before we begin to actually eat, we can be attentive and mindful while setting the table and serving the meal. As mindfulness also includes taking a mindful approach to ourselves in general, the question of what we eat is also important. Does it nourish us sufficiently? Do we feel vital and healthy after eating this food?

Mindful cooking and eating also involved thinking more consciously about the production, transport and sale of food. What paths does the food take until it finally ends up on our plate? Under what conditions do those who produce our food work? Is the production of the food environmentally friendly and fair?

In order to make the idea of mindful eating more tangible, I often use an exercise called “The Sound of a Raisin” from the book *Achtsam mit Kindern leben [Living Mindfully with Children]* by Nils Altner, Ph.D. – a mindfulness researcher at the University of Duisburg / Essen.

## The Sound of a Raisin<sup>1</sup>

(Original text by Nils Altner, Ph.D.)

Invite yourself to an experiment in sensual perception:

Take a raisin, without eating it right away, and hold it between your fingers.

I have one here too. Look at this little something and pretend you are examining such a thing for the first time.

What do you see?

If you'd like, describe aloud what you see.

I see something wrinkled and brown with grooves. It's partly transparent. It looks like a piece of amber. Here you can see the base of the stem.

Do you see anything else?

How does this thing feel?

Mine is soft and malleable. It feels rough and gets softer and stickier between my fingers.

What do you notice?

Do you think if we hold the fruit to our ear and press lightly, it makes a sound? Try it.

Yes, mine crackles! And yours?

Did you expect that?

Let's smell it. What does it smell like? I smell something fruity, sweet.

Something leathery and tart, not just sweet. What does your raisin smell like?

Do you notice something happening in your mouth? My saliva's starting to flow.

My mouth is ready to chew and eat. But we're not there yet.

Let's first hold the fruit to our lips. How does it feel?

It tickles mine. And my lips feel the rough ridges of the dried fruit.

Do your lips feel these ridges more clearly than your fingers?

Now, let's put the raisin between our lips and nudge it with our tongue.

What happens? Can you taste anything? My tongue is already noting the sweetness.

Do you notice that also? Where does your tongue taste the sweetness – at the tip, more at the back or on the sides of the tongue?

Now we put the raisin in our mouth and move it back and forth. What do you feel now? It seems to me the grooves are getting bigger and bigger. Also in my mouth, the whole raisin appears to get bigger and bigger. Do you notice that too?

I notice I'm salivating more. I think it's now time.

Let's put the fruit between two teeth and close our eyes.

My jaw muscles are tightening. What about yours? My mouth is filled with sweetness.

This one little raisin tastes so sweet!

After the exercise a conversation follows:

Moderator: "What did we just do?"

Response 1: "Eat mindfully."

Response 2: "Eat with all the senses."

Moderator: "Do you normally eat a raisin like this? If not, then how?"

Did you think of anything else while you were eating? Did you discover anything new while eating?"

The course participants are given the task to try eating mindfully a few times in their everyday life – regardless of what is eaten or how much, or how much time they want to spend on this exercise.

The food can also be prepared in a mindful way. With salads, for example: notice the juice that the cucumber produces as it is sliced, the different shades of green ...

As the Social Work degree program has more semester hours per week than the other programs, we combine these course hours into a “mindfulness day”. On this day, the focus is on mindful cooking and eating together. In a relatively small space with a kitchen, around 20 people move around together, trying to cook a meal without speaking to each other. It’s always remarkable how well this works, and the food tastes (for the most part) excellent ;-). The setting of the tables is done just as silently, and during the first 10 minutes of the meal no one speaks while they eat. For many, remaining silent over such a long period – approximately 90 minutes from cooking to the first bite – is a completely new experience. After the first 10 minutes of silence at the table, some immediately return to speaking, while others have taken so much pleasure in the silence that they prefer to go on eating without speaking.

Moderator: “What was your experience?”

Response 1: “Super! I’ll try it at home too.”

Response 2: “I never thought it possible to cook like this.”

Response 3: “I found it embarrassing to just look at others, not saying anything.”

Response 4: “I paid much more attention to my food.”

The topic of mindful cooking and eating can also be expanded further: including, for example, healthy and sustainable eating.<sup>2</sup>

Since so many students said they found eating in silence a positive experience, it might be interesting to set up an area in the university cafeteria where this could be a regular possibility.

### Primary literature used for the lessons

Thich Nhat Hanh / Cheung, Lilian (2010). *Savor. Mindful Eating, Mindful Life*.  
New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

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<sup>1</sup> Altner 2009, p. 60 f. [Author’s translation]. This exercise is reprinted with the kind permission of the author.

<sup>2</sup> At the University of Applied Sciences in Amsterdam, one of the Munich Model’s collaboration partners, there has been a joint project between the Positive Psychology program and the European Institute for Macrobiotics (Kushi) for several years now.

Auch habe ich die Konsistenz des Gerichts (Semmelknödel mit Pilsener) noch wie so bewusst wahrgenommen. Eine Freundin von mir meinte allerdings, ihr sei das Essen zu schleimig, wenn sie sich so darauf konzentriert.

Auch wenn es spannend war, sich über die Erfahrung auszutauschen, werde ich es das nächste Mal alleine ausprobieren. Wir sind dann doch recht schnell abgeschweift und haben uns unterhalten.

30. 10.

Achtsam essen: alleine

Was ich sehr angenehm fand:  
Ich hatte den Eindruck, dass ich wirklich aufgehört habe, zu essen, als ich satt war. Anders als sonst habe ich nicht mehr nachgefast, weil es mir so geschmeckt hat. Dadurch, dass ich eh total bei der Sache war und den Geschmack "ausgekostet" habe, hat mir eine Portion völlig gereicht.

1. 11.

20 Minuten Meditation am Morgen.

→ Hat gut getan. Konnte mich gut fokussieren... wahrscheinlich auch, weil ich heute frei habe.

Abends: Bodyscan zum Einschlafen (weiter als bis zu den Knien bin ich nicht gekommen)

8. 11.

"Liebende Güte" finde ich ziemlich cool. Ich glaube, dass das eine Übung ist, auf die man super zurückgreifen kann, wenn mal nicht so läuft.

Heute war ein blöder Trödel-Tag, an dem ich nicht ansatzweise das geschafft habe, was ich mir vorgenommen hatte. Deswegen war ich abends ziemlich geknickt und ein bisschen sauer auf mich selbst.

Körperscan im Sitzen auf dem Sofa.

20 min, war ein bisschen komisch weil ich mich immer wieder ein umsehen musste und so war meine Konzentration nicht so gut

14.05.19

Ich habe gerade auf Grund meiner Schwangerschaft extrem Gelüster auf Schokolade. Also habe ich ein Schokoladestückchen aufmerksam gegessen. Und

damit habe ich es geschafft bei einem zu bleiben.

17.05.19

Gehmeditation, 20 min  
Dabei kann man super abschalten, da man so sehr damit beschäftigt ist auf seine Schritte zu achten.

20.05.19

Meditation mit einem Stein.  
Ich habe mir einen Stein genommen und in ganz genau befühlt. Ich habe probiert alle Konkrete nachzufahren und in mir



# Journal Notes

## Mindful Cooking and Eating

F. S.

5/25/19, breathing meditation + MA-RA-NA-THA

Duration: 15 min

Today was a hot day and I was just with a client that I look after for 24 hours. We went shopping and then I started cooking. Unexpectedly, my circulation went on a strike – I think it was due to the strain of carrying shopping bags in the heat and the fumes while cooking. I was sweating, I felt nauseous and I could hardly stand on my feet. I sat down, but a slight panic spread over me. It didn't get better. So I tried to breathe evenly and concentrate on my breathing. My thoughts were confused and I felt very uncomfortable. So in addition, I tried the Maranatha method to try and relieve the panic. I did this for a few minutes until I was able to get up and get some water. I sat down again and continued the meditation. The Maranatha helped me a lot to keep calm and to overcome this state. After 15 minutes I felt better and I was able to continue cooking.

M. M.

Mindful eating a kiwi

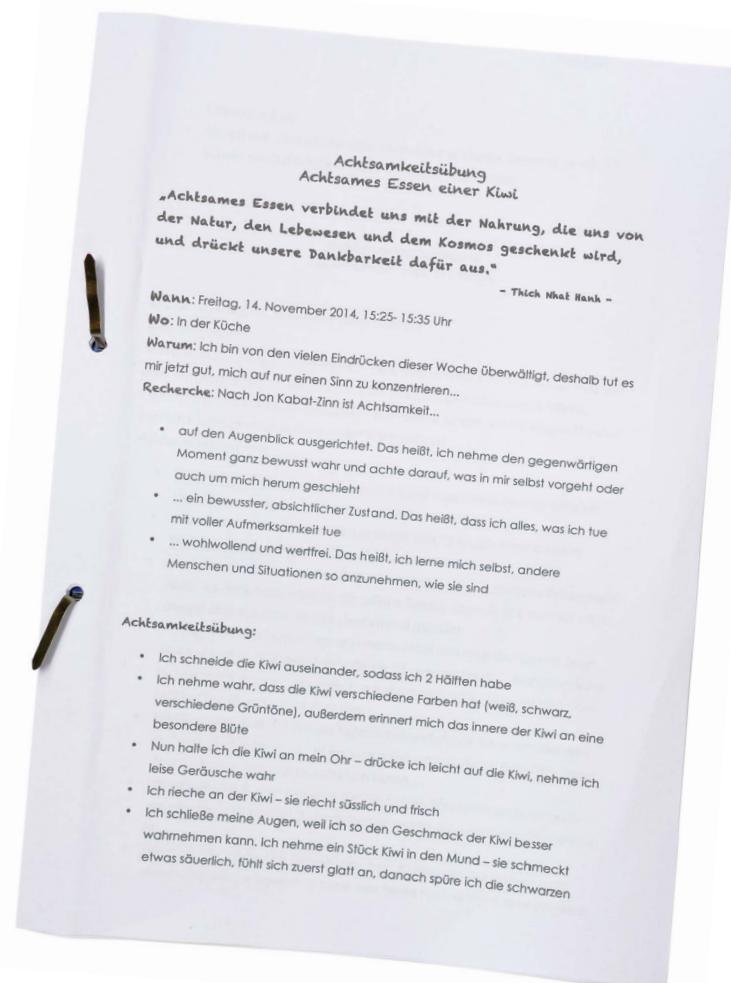
When: Friday, 11/14/14, 3:25–3:35 p.m.

Where: in the kitchen

Why: I am overwhelmed by the many impressions of this week, so it does me good now to concentrate only on one sense at a time.

Research: mindfulness according to Jon Kabat-Zinn

- focused on the moment. This means that I perceive the present moment very consciously and pay attention to what is going on within myself or what is happening around me
- a conscious, intentional state. This means that everything I do, I do with full attention
- benevolent and value-free. This means that I learn to accept myself, other people and situations as they are.



### Mindfulness exercise:

- I cut the kiwi apart so that I have 2 halves.
- I notice that the kiwi has different colors (white, black, different shades of green), and the inside of the kiwi reminds me of an exotic blossom.
- Now I hold the kiwi against my ear – if I press lightly on the kiwi, I perceive soft sounds.
- I smell the kiwi – it smells sweet and fresh.
- I close my eyes because it enables me to better perceive the taste of the kiwi. I put a piece of kiwi in my mouth – it tastes a bit sour, feels smooth at first, and then I feel the black seeds and grooves.
- I notice that the last few minutes I was more in the present; I was able to eat the kiwi in peace and without rushing.

## Mindful tea drinking

**When:** Sunday, 11/16/14, 2:20 p.m.

**Where:** at the dining table

**Why:** It's noon on Sunday and I know that I have to leave my familiar surroundings again this evening to go to Munich to study. That's why, rather than focus my thoughts on what will happen a few hours from now, I'm making an effort to focus on the "now".

Mindfulness exercise:

- First I turn on the kettle and get my favorite cup with many colorful flowers and dots out of the kitchen cupboard.
- While the water begins to boil, I put a tea bag of a delicious Ayurvedic spiced tea into the cup.
- I smell the tea bag. The scent reminds me of various trips to Asia; I see, for example, the green tea plantations in Sri Lanka before me. In this moment I feel liberated and happy.
- I pour the boiling water into my cup and let the tea steep for a few minutes. Meanwhile I smell how the tea's aroma unfurls.
- Now I sit down at the dining table on a comfortable chair in front of the stove and take a sip of tea.
- It's still very hot; I take a sip anyway. I taste the cinnamon and vanilla in the tea, but also other oriental spices. I think of bright colors, markets in India ...
- I close my eyes and imagine the green tea plantations in Sri Lanka, how the tea was harvested and transported before it reached us.
- After about 10 minutes, I realize that while I was drinking tea, I didn't even think about what's still to come, that I have to say goodbye and go to Munich ...

## N. S.

5/14/19

I have extreme cravings for chocolate as a result of my pregnancy. So I ate a chocolate piece attentively. And with that I managed to anchor my awareness in myself.

## P. A.

For some time now I have been trying to eat with more awareness. Not speaking during cooking and eating is very pleasant. One perceives the food and the environment better, more intensely.

During the meal you can focus on the taste and consistency in your mouth. One tastes the individual flavors much more intensely, and the individual "components" of the food are only gradually integrated.

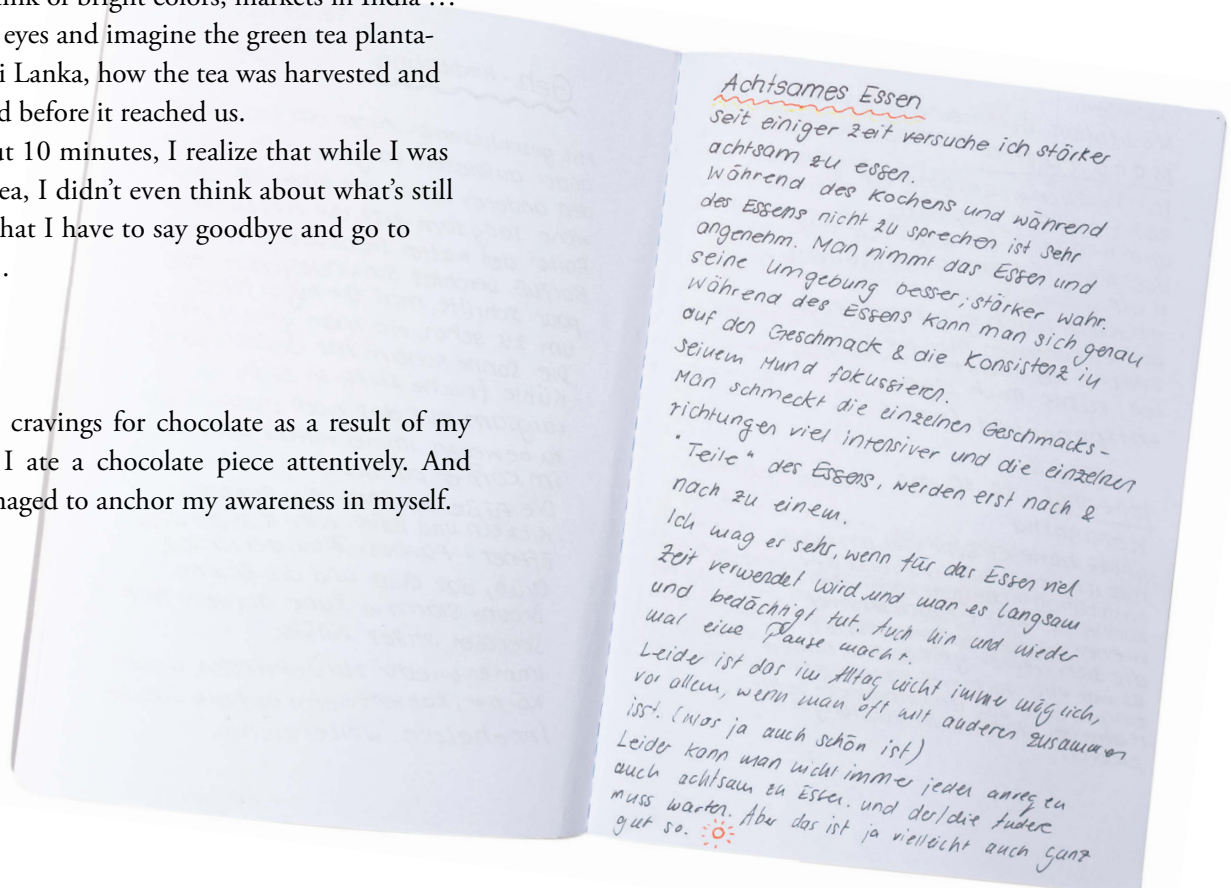
I like very much to take a longer period of time to eat and to do so slowly and thoughtfully, taking a break now and then. This is not always possible in everyday life, especially if you often eat together with others (which is also nice).

Unfortunately, you can't always encourage everyone to eat mindfully and so the other person has to wait. But maybe that is just as well.

## S. L.

### Eating mindfully: alone

Which I found very pleasant – I had the impression that I actually stopped eating when I was full. While it tasted so good, I didn't take a second helping like usual. One portion was enough for me because I was totally focused and was able to truly "taste" the flavors.





# Mindful Communication

As I was on the train to visit relatives in Freising, I noticed two young women a few seats away from me, as they were speaking so loudly. It wasn't both of them, only one was talking and the other was mostly only listening. Whenever the listener wanted to contribute something herself, the other one immediately took the floor again. It was a continuous monologue – for almost 35 minutes. At some point, I tried to cover my ears so that I didn't have to listen to the constant babbling.

Mindful communication is something completely different from the one-sided “speech” that I witnessed on the train. It's about creating space in the conversation so that people can really connect with each other.



Monologue on the train.

- <sup>1</sup> What should I now say
- <sup>2</sup> What else can I think of to say
- <sup>3</sup> endure silence
- <sup>4</sup> NOTHING is also okay

Here's the structure of an exercise for mindful communication that we practice in class:

Groups of two are formed.

One person talks, the other person just listens. It's possible to respond to what is being said with facial expressions, but there should be no verbal reactions.

As in normal conversation, eye contact should continue.

In addition to content, the listener can also pay attention to how something is said – particularly noting the voice, such as the emphasis, the melody of speech, the pitch and the timbre. While speaking, the speaker can also note the facial expressions and gestures of the other person.

After a while, about 5 minutes, the roles are reversed.

This is followed by a feedback round between the two people.

“What was observed, experienced?”

“Was it easy to listen to the other person?”

“What is it like for the speaker when the other person doesn't participate in the conversation?”

At the end, there is a group discussion about the experience.

The topic of conversation is variable. We usually use “What does happiness mean to me?” as the topic.

*It's helpful to remember at the beginning  
of every communication with another person  
that there is a Buddha inside each of us.*

Thich Nhat Hanh

Examples from the feedback round:

Response 1: "At some point I didn't know what to say. It was kind of embarrassing."

Moderator: "I didn't say you had to talk the entire time."

Response 1: "Yes, but it's difficult. You expect a response."

Moderator: "Why is it embarrassing to not say anything at times? Are we afraid of silence?"

Response 1: "It's nice to be able to just converse. You have the time to formulate your thoughts."

Response 2: "As there's no other input, the conversation can't unintentionally go in another direction."

Response 3: "It's exciting to listen really closely to what the other person has to say. You also learn something new."

Response 4: "And while just listening, you don't have to think about what to say in response."

Response 5: "It's much more relaxing!"

In another unit, we intensified the exercise a bit.

Again, one person speaks for a set time and the other listens.

Now, however, the person speaking should also pay attention to their own physical and emotional reactions. It's now about self-awareness. For example, about your own voice, the emphasis on what is said, the timbre, your own feelings when speaking etc. The listener now also pays attention to their own reactions. After the specified time has elapsed, the partners change roles. Then there is feedback again in groups of two, and later in the entire group.

In everyday life it's often the case that the same people always talk and others hardly ever get a chance to speak. Our fast-moving society doesn't make it easy for those who are more introverted or who require a longer time to establish a proper train of thought. Listening to the people who usually say very little can be insightful.

Mindful communication requires an attitude of interest and respect by all the participants. If the participants of the conversation also remain authentic and sincere, a deeper exchange can take place, which includes the heart level.

### Primary literature used for the lessons

Thich Nhat Hanh (2013). *The Art of Communicating*. London: Rider.

# Journal Notes

## Mindful Communication

J. H.

6/15/17

**Where:** at home

**What:** mindful listening

I didn't meditate today, but a friend of mine told me something, and so I really listened consciously and didn't just wait for my turn to speak. He noticed that too, and he told me that he finds it pleasant to talk with me. And that's exactly the reason – because he has the feeling that I'm really interested in what he's saying. This kind of feedback naturally offers one positive validation.

N. S.

5/1/19

I've been trying to communicate mindfully since the last seminar. It's harder for me than I thought – not to react immediately to what is being said, with my own stories, thoughts and ideas. I think you have to pay attention again and again and then gradually add in the impressions of voice and body language.

01.05.19

Ich habe seit dem letzten Seminar versucht achtsam zu kommunizieren. Es fällt mir schwerer als gedacht nicht sofort mit eigenen Geschichten, Gedanken und Ideen auf das Gesagte zu reagieren. Ich denke dafür muss man immer wieder darauf achten und dann nach und nach die Eindrücke von Stimme und Körpersprache hinzunehmen.

03.05.19

Die heutige Meditation war wie ein ankommen, heimkommen, zuhieden werden.

Ich habe ca. 20 min eine Sitmeditation gemacht bei der ich mich nur auf meine Atmung konzentriert habe.

04.05.19

5-minütige Geräusch meditation  
Ich habe probiert innerhalb und außerhalb des Hauses Geräusche zu hören, zu identifizieren und einzuteilen. Spannend war wie es

**S. B.****12/5/18****Where: meditation room in Paoso****What: mindful communication**

My communication partner begins to tell what happiness is for her. I notice how she slows down during the conversation and is actually waiting for an answer from me. I find it difficult not to answer – it seems rude to me. But on the other hand, it's also nice not to have to give an opinion on a topic. Because of the uninterrupted communication, it's easy for me to follow her facial expressions when she says something that excites her, or rather less so.

**S. Z.****Mindful listening****Time: approx. 15 min**

I'm aware that I'm someone who, when someone tells me something, has an inner urge to immediately make a contribution to it, without first letting the person really finish and process what they actually said.

Since I sometimes tend to talk a lot, I'm afraid that I might overwhelm people with it or not give them enough opportunity to speak, especially if someone is too shy to express themselves. Since I met with a friend today who had something to tell me, I wanted to try to listen attentively and focus on the content without responding right back.

I really have to admit that in the beginning I found it difficult not to say anything, because my girlfriend told me about the negative behavior of her friend – with whom I do not have a good relationship and therefore mostly keep my distance. So I found it hard not to comment on, which I managed, but on the other hand my facial features became more expressive than usual. I also noticed that my girlfriend's reaction to my silence led to her tell about it in much more detail. This made it easier for me to understand and interpret her point of view, because I also analyzed her facial expressions better than I usually do.

Since my girlfriend did not know about my "experiment", I only did the meditation for about the first 5 minutes. But I noticed that even after that I listened more intensively and talked less than usual.

**Mindful listening****Time: approx. 8 min**

Today a friend of mine was very sad, so I visited her. I often noticed that many people in such a situation simply want to be understood or want to talk certain things from their soul, so I decided to just listen.

In the beginning it was difficult for me not to suggest improvements or solutions and to interrupt her, but when I noticed that she was slowly getting to the end of what she wanted to get off her chest, she asked me herself what I would suggest and what I thought about it. It made me realize how much understanding I would have lacked for the situation if I had not listened to the end and bombarded her directly with my suggestions. It also struck me that such behavior could give the impression that one wished to quickly dismiss the subject, or that I wasn't interested in her problem.

## Body Scan

*“When we put energy into actually experiencing our body and we refuse to get caught up in the overlay of judgmental thinking about it, our whole view of it and of ourself can change dramatically.”*

Jon Kabat-Zinn

The body scan is an exercise in which we focus our attention on individual areas of the body while gradually moving our awareness throughout the entire body. The important thing is to feel each part of the body attentively without judging any thoughts or feelings that may arise.

This exercise is usually performed while lying on one’s back. Alternatively, it can of course also be practiced in a sitting position, for example at a desk in the office or as a relaxation exercise during class.

The exercise was popularized by Jon Kabat-Zinn, a professor of medicine and a pioneer in the mindfulness movement, who developed it in the late 1970s as part of his MBSR program for patients with chronic pain at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center.

There are many forms of body scanning, and numerous tutorials can be found in books and audio media, as well as on the internet. The length of time required for this exercise also varies greatly depending on the tutorial.

In class, we follow Jon Kabat-Zinn’s description of the exercise. However, the duration of the exercise is shorter in our case and usually lasts a quarter of an hour. A singing bowl is struck as a signal for participants to shift their attention from one part of the body to the next part. The tone announces the transition and also serves as a gentle reminder for any participants who might be falling asleep to focus anew.



Body scan is practiced while lying down. It also can help if you have problems falling asleep.



## Instructions

### Singing bowl 1x strike

We lay on our backs in a relaxed manner on a mat on the floor. We note how the body feels the floor and the surface of the mat. One can also imagine lying in the sand by the sea, in a meadow, on the sofa at home or simply here in the classroom. We are in a state of complete relaxation. Now we note our breath; it comes and goes by itself. We breathe in a completely relaxed manner – in and out ... in ... out ...

Now we take our attention to the left foot and continue to the toes of the left foot. We note how they feel. We simply feel and observe without judging the feeling. Just scan, hence the name body scan. If one wishes to, one can also move the toes a little bit. Then we take our attention to the middle area of the left foot ...

the left ankle

the left lower leg (the calf, the shin ...)

the left knee

the left thigh (we can also momentarily tighten and relax it)

the left side of the pelvis

### The singing bowl is struck once

Now we take our attention to the right foot. We note what the toes feel like. Again we just feel and observe without judging the feeling. We just scan. If we want, we can also move the toes a little. Then we move our awareness to the middle area of the right foot ...

the right ankle

the right lower leg (the calf, the shin ...)

the right knee

the right thigh (we can also momentarily tighten and relax it)

the right side of the pelvis

### The singing bowl is struck once

Now we move our awareness to the tailbone and from there scan slowly upwards along the vertebrae. In the front of the body, we scan the groin area and from there we move slowly towards the stomach.

the hips

further up along the vertebrae

in the front up towards the sternum

the chest area

the back of the shoulders

### The singing bowl is struck once



Now we move our awareness to the left hand and then to the fingers.

We can also direct our breath to the fingers. Maybe even breathe with our fingers. Just give it a try. Then continue to the middle part of the left hand. Here too we only feel, observe.

the left wrist

the left forearm

the left elbow

the upper left arm ... the triceps, the biceps

If you wish to, you can also momentarily contract and then relax these parts.

the left shoulder

### The singing bowl is struck once

Now to the right hand and here to the fingers.

We can also direct our breath there. Maybe even breathe with our fingers. Just try it.

Then move on to the middle part of the right hand. Feel here too, observe.

the right wrist

the right forearm

the right elbow

the upper part of the right ... the triceps, the biceps

If you wish to, you can also momentarily contract and then relax these parts

the left shoulder

### The singing bowl is struck once

Now the neck area, feel into it. Relax.

the front of the neck and throat area

the chin

the area of the mouth

the nose and sinuses

the ears

the eyes – comfortably let them drop towards the back of the head

the forehead area

Now the crown. Here we can imagine an imaginary opening through which we breathe.

Breathe in at the top of the crown and let the breath flow throughout the whole body.

Finally, let it flow out again through the soles of the feet.

And just repeat this: breathe in at the top of the head, let it flow throughout the body and out through the soles of the feet.

Repeat this a few more times, and if somewhere in the body we feel a place that does not feel so pleasant, we can direct the breath to that place. We can even breathe into that place.

Now we slowly come back again.

### The singing bowl is struck three times

Slowly open your eyes. Don't sit up right away. Maybe move your toes and fingers a little first. Or simply just continue to lay there on your back.

Moderator: "How was it?"

When the exercise is tried for the first time, a conversation follows in teams of two, and then afterwards among the entire group.

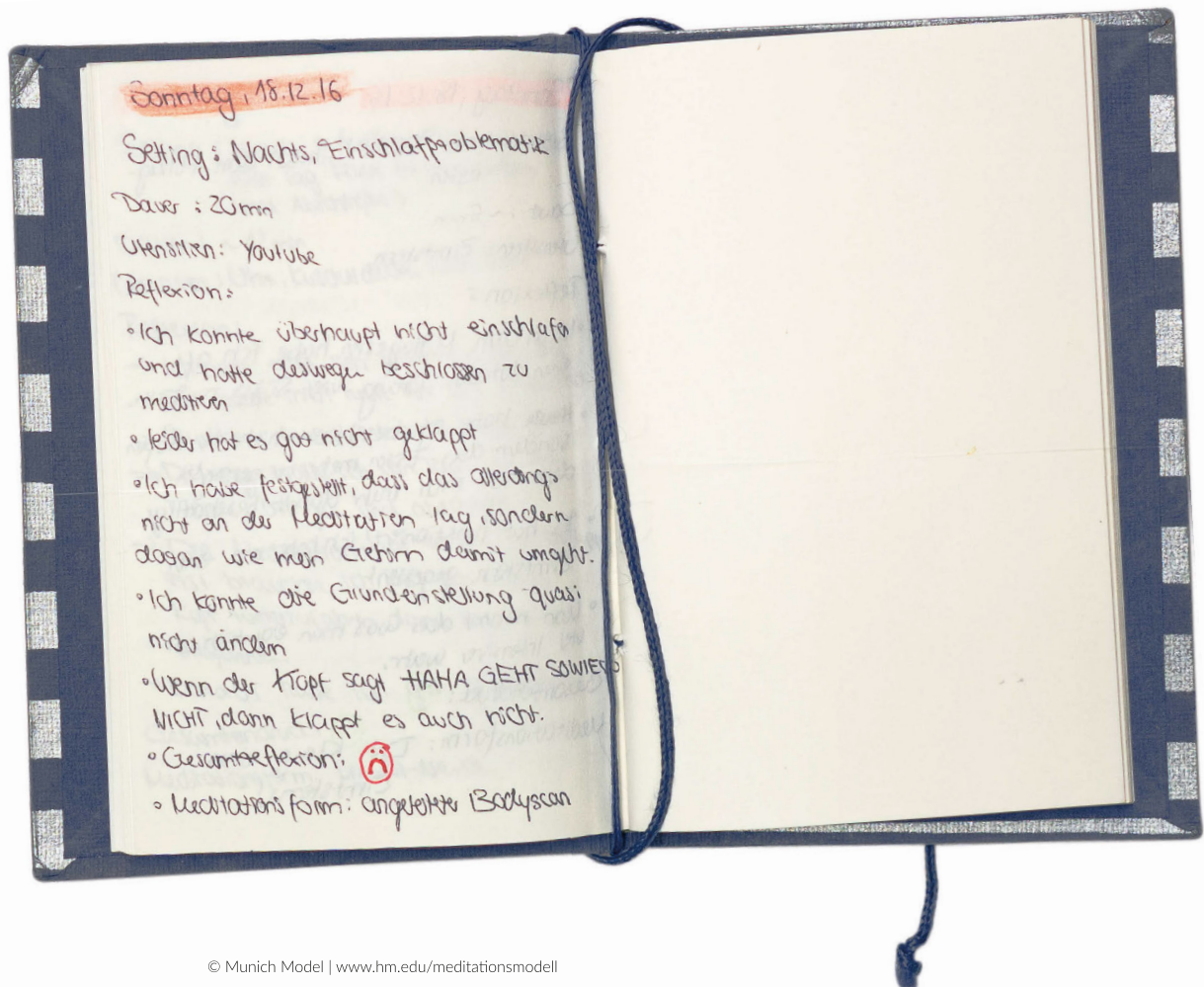
My experience thus far indicates that usually a large number of participants are not able to remain attentive and focused for the entire time. Many report that they have missed one or more passages, i.e. they have drifted off for a moment or fallen asleep.

This shows that many participants are relatively tired and through this exercise are able to relax and come to rest.

From the meditation journals it can be seen that many participants use the body scan exercise in the evening to help them fall asleep. Although the exercise is not primarily intended for this purpose, many participants are able to fall asleep more quickly and better as a result.

### Primary literature used for the lessons

Kabat-Zinn, Jon (2013). *Full Catastrophe Living. Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. New York: Bantam Books.



# Journal Notes

## Body Scan

**F. S.**

**6/6/19**

**Duration: 15 min**

Today the day began early for me, at 8am at the university. After attending two courses I was finished and went home. There I felt very tired and as if I had no strength. So I lay down on the couch and chose a guided meditation – body scan – on YouTube. Before I started, I prepared myself with a short breathing meditation to allow myself to mentally switch off. I was able to do this very well. During the body scan I was able to intensely feel the individual parts I was concentrating on. I flooded my feet and legs with energy, as well as my hips, arms and finally my head. At the end, I took a few deep breaths and felt ready for the second part of the day.

**H. V.**

I'm lying in bed. I'm restless. Flower belly. How can I calm myself down a bit?

I started to breathe calmly and consciously. Feeling my toes.

The air current continued up the shin. Then the kneecap and the hip. It all felt heavy. I became calmer, slower and more tired.

The body scan was particularly good for my stomach; it was flushed with air and widened and relaxed.

The chest also widened.

At this point the eyes became so very heavy. The body scan was lost in sleep.

**J. Z.**

**12/14/14**

One evening I couldn't fall asleep, so I decided to do a body scan. In my head I went through the body parts bit by bit [...]. It did me good to direct my thoughts to my body and I noticed how I was getting more tired. When I had completed it, I was satisfied and calm and could fall asleep relatively quickly.

This week I also again noticed progress in myself. I reacted more calmly in stressful situations and didn't get upset about people or circumstances that had always annoyed

### Bodyscann

Ich liege im Bett. Bin unruhig. Flower Bauch. Wie kann ich mich bisschen beruhigen?  
 Ich fing an ruhig und bewusst zu atmen.  
 Meine Zehen zu spüren.  
 Der Luftstrom ging weiter das Schienbein hinauf.  
 Dann die Kniescheibe und die Hüfte. Es fühlte sich alles schwer an. Ich wurde ruhiger, träger und müder.  
 Dem Magen hat der Bodyscan besonders gut getan, er wurde mit Luft durchströmt und weitete sich und entspannte sich.  
 Die Brust weitete sich ebenfalls.  
 An dieser Stelle wurden die Augen so sehr schwer. Der Bodyscann verlor sich im Schlaf.

me. I also had the feeling that I perceived my surroundings more intensely and could concentrate better on one thing.

**M. K.**

**At night, difficulty falling asleep**

**Duration: 20 min**

**Tools: YouTube**

- I could not fall asleep at all and therefore decided to meditate.
- Unfortunately it didn't work at all.
- I found out that this was not due to the meditation, but because of how my brain deals with it.
- I could not change my basic attitude.
- If the head says: "Ha ha, it won't work anyway", then it doesn't work.
- Total reflection: ☹️
- Meditation form: aspired to do the body scan

**M. M.**

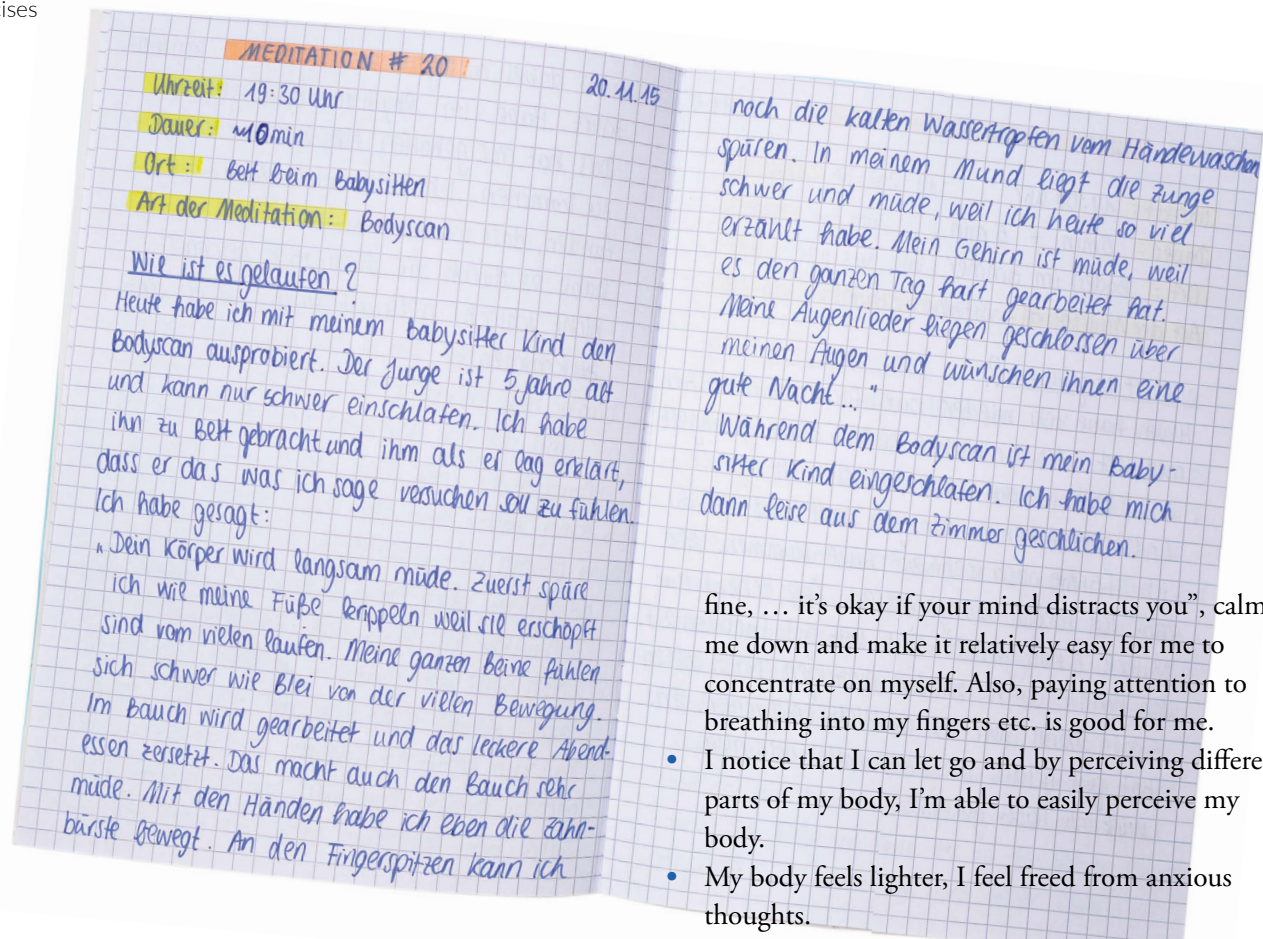
**When: Monday, 11/10/14, 4:25 p.m.**

**Where: in the bedroom on the wooden floor, lying on a blanket**

**Why:** better ability to concentrate; the week begins and I have to learn different things for my studies, let anxious thoughts go, feel my body

**Research:** The body scan is a meditation exercise that has its origin in the Buddhist Vipassana tradition. This exercise strengthens body awareness, as we usually only





perceive our body from the outside. The body scan is a journey through the body, a mental scanning of one's own body. The focus of the thoughts is directed to different areas of the body, one after the other. Thus one's line of vision is changed, we examine our body from the inside. The body scan can be very challenging, because often our mind is constantly jumping from thought to thought, and doesn't come to rest. The exercise is about perceiving our own body sensations, thoughts and feelings and becoming aware of them without judging them. The body scan is also well suited for strengthening one's own concentration, which is a prerequisite for the practice of mindfulness.

#### Body Scan exercise:

- I watch various body scan videos on YouTube to find out which [is narrated by a] pleasant voice and appeals to me.
- I decide to do the body scan with the following instructions: "a 15 minute guided body scan" (pleasant voice of speaker ☺).
- As in the meditation seminar, the body scan makes me feel "at peace with myself" relatively quickly, I'm quickly able to relax.
- The sentences of the speaker: "... you are in no hurry, let go as best you can, ... take your time, there is nothing to do in this moment, ... everything is

noch die kalten Wassertropfen vom Händewaschen spüren. In meinem Mund liegt die Zunge schwer und müde, weil ich heute so viel erzählt habe. Mein Gehirn ist müde, weil es den ganzen Tag hart gearbeitet hat. Meine Augenlider liegen geschlossen über meinen Augen und wünschen ihnen eine gute Nacht..."

Während dem Bodyscan ist mein Babysitter Kind eingeschlafen. Ich habe mich dann leise aus dem Zimmer geschlichen.

fine, ... it's okay if your mind distracts you", calm me down and make it relatively easy for me to concentrate on myself. Also, paying attention to breathing into my fingers etc. is good for me.

- I notice that I can let go and by perceiving different parts of my body, I'm able to easily perceive my body.
- My body feels lighter, I feel freed from anxious thoughts.
- I notice (despite closed eyes) that I have a smiling expression on my face during the body scan. ☺

#### N. H.

11/20/15, 7:15 p.m.

**Duration: 10 min**

**Place: bed while babysitting**

**Type of meditation: body scan**

Today I tried the body scan with the child I babysit. The boy is 5 years old and has difficulty falling asleep. I put him to bed and when he lay down I explained to him that he should try to feel what I am saying.

I said: "My body is slowly getting tired. At first I feel my feet tingling because they are exhausted from all the running around. My legs feel heavy like lead from all the movement. My stomach is working and the delicious dinner is being digested. This also makes the stomach very tired. I have just used my hand to hold my toothbrush, while brushing my teeth. After washing my hands, I can still feel the cold drops of water on my fingertips. In my mouth my tongue lies heavy and tired, because I have talked so much today. My brain is tired because it has been working hard all day. My eyelids are closed over my eyes and I wish them a good night ..."

During the body scan, the child I babysit fell asleep. I then quietly snuck out of the room.



**T. O.****When: on night duty, about 2:30 a.m.****Where: in my bedroom, in bed****What/how:** tonight's night shift was very unsettling and labor-intensive. Therefore it was hard for me to fall asleep, especially with the thought of having to get up at 6am for

the early shift again. So I tried the body scan again. At first it was a little difficult to get started, but soon I was able to ignore my thoughts and concentrate on my body. I can't say exactly how far I've come or when I fell asleep. In any case, I was able to relax quickly and sleep well.

06.06.19: Bodyscan  
Dauer: ca. 15 Min.

Heute begann der Tag für mich früh um 8:00 Uhr in der Uni. Nach zwei Kursen hatte ich aus und fuhr nach Hause. Dort war ich sehr geschäftig und antriebslos. Deshalb legte ich mich auf die Couch und suchte mir auf YouTube eine geführte Meditation – Bodyscan – aus. Bevor ich anfang bereitete ich mich mit einer kurzen Atemmeditation vor, um gedanklich ganz abschalten zu können. Dies gelang mir sehr gut. Beim Bodyscan konnte ich die einzelnen Partien, auf die ich mich konzentrierte intensiv spüren. Meine Füße und Beine durchflutete ich mit Energie; genauso meine Hüfte, Arme und zum Schluss meinen Kopf. Am Ende atmete ich einige Male tief ein und fühlte mich bereit für den zweiten Teil des Tages.

16.6.16 BodyscanWann: im Nachtdienst, ca. 2<sup>30</sup> Uhr

Wo: in der Schlafkammer, im Bett

Was/Wie: Der heutige Nachtdienst war sehr unruhig und arbeits-

intensiv. Deshalb war es schwer für mich zur Ruhe zu kommen, v.a.

mit dem Gedanken daran, dass ich um 6<sup>00</sup> Uhr wieder für den Frühdienst

aufstehen muss. Also versuchte ich es wieder mit dem Bodyscan. Der Einstieg

fiel mir zunächst etwas schwer, doch schon bald gelang es mir meine

Gedanken zu ignorieren und mich auf meinen Körper zu konzentrieren. Ich

kann gar nicht genau sagen, wie weit ich gekommen bin oder wann ich

eingeschlafen bin. Auf jeden Fall konnte ich mich schnell entspannen und gut schlafen.

19.6.16 Mantram „Mara-natta“Wann: abends, ca. 23<sup>30</sup> Uhr

Wo: WG-Zimmer, am Boden im Schneidersitz

Was/Wie: Nach einem Streit mit meinem

Freund kam ich ziemlich spät und gestresst in München an.

Da mich die Gedanken daran nicht

losließen, versuchte ich mit Meditation

etwas zur Ruhe zu kommen. Da ich

noch sehr aufgewühlt war, fiel mir der

Einstieg schwer und ich brauchte 5 Minuten,

bis ich fokussiert war. Dann fand ich

aber relativ schnell in meinen Rhythmus

„Mara-natta“. Ich merkte, wie meine

Gedanken immer weiter weg waren und

ich mich immer besser auf die

Meditation einlassen konnte. Den

Wecker hatte ich auf 20 Minuten

11.5.16

„liebende Güte“

wie sie es so nett sagen,

hatte ich heute den ganzen Nachmittag in Gedanken mit einem / einer „Nerverlein“ zu kämpfen.

Ich habe mich derart über diese Person aufgeregt, dass ich mir dachte „jetzt reiß dich zusammen, das bringt doch alles nix, dass Du dich aufregst... weder Du hast etwas davon noch das „Nerverlein“.

Also habe ich einen Konter versucht:

„liebende Güte“... das andere Extrem:

Also habe ich mich auf den Boden gesetzt, und die Sätze der Liebenden Güte für andere Personen langsam vorgelesen und jeden Satz noch einmal leise in Gedanken wiederholt.

„Möge diese Person sicher und geborgen sein und frei von innerer und äußerer Not.“

Möge sie glücklich und zufrieden sein.

Möge sie gesund und heil sein.

Möge sie die Leichtigkeit d. Wohlbefindens erfahren.“ Und tatsächlich, ich selbst war glücklicher darüber, nicht schlecht über



# Loving Kindness

The meditation of loving kindness is a technique in which we focus on a quality, namely that of compassion, rather than on an object or an action. There are many different variations.

For example, we can inwardly speak positive affirmations, in which we wish for security, safety, contentment, health, etc. for ourselves and others. In class we have used an example from the book *Persönlichkeit und Präsenz. Achtsamkeit im Lehrerberuf* [Personality and Presence. Mindfulness in the teaching profession] by the mindfulness trainer Vera Kaltwasser:

## For me personally

May I be safe and secure and free from internal and external distress.

May I be happy and content.

May I be healthy and whole.

May I experience the ease of well-being.

## For other people

May this person be safe and secure and free from internal and external distress.

May they be happy and content.

May they be healthy and whole.

May they experience the ease of well-being.\*<sup>1</sup>

We can speak the affirmations inwardly, but we can also repeat single words or pass on the feeling that the respective words trigger in us. It is important that we engage with the affirmation in the right way.

## Visualizing goodwill and compassion – for yourself and for others

When we do the Metta meditation for others, we have the choice of limiting ourselves to a few close people or involving a larger group of people. We can think of people we like very much, such as partners, parents, siblings, friends etc. But also people we know but do not have a direct personal relationship with, for example the bus driver, the lady at the checkout in the supermarket, people in the subway, at university, etc. Or we can also think of people we don't like, who sometimes annoy us or with whom we have arguments.

In a Metta meditation, we can also effectively visualize that we pour a whole bucket filled with loving kindness over ourselves or someone else. This form of loving kindness is also helpful to connect with people who are far away from us, for example when relatives or friends are in a difficult situation or are ill, and with whom we'd like to be.

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It is not necessarily easy to do the meditation of loving kindness for people we don't really like. The motivation of pouring out the bucket first requires that we wish the person in question well. At the same time, this also requires us to confront our own preconception that we don't like this person. We can solve this conflict by changing our attitude towards the person: perhaps this person didn't mean it that way and is perhaps currently stressed out? Maybe the situation was to blame for the person's behaviour? Or maybe I myself overreacted?

The ability to adopt different perspectives in such a situation helps us to be more calm in life and less upset. However, the variant in which one sends understanding and loving kindness to annoying people poses a slight risk: for those who already by nature have a lot of compassion for others, and tend to neglect themselves in realizing this, the exercise doesn't require one to give even more – to exhibit even more understanding. In this case it's better that one learns to appreciate and protect oneself more, and pour a bucket of loving kindness over oneself more often.

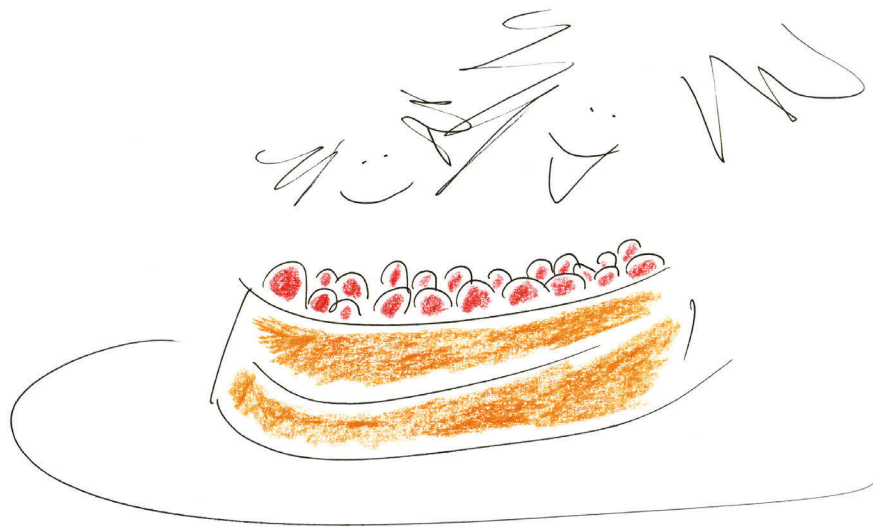
Pour out a bucket of loving kindness.



## Anger

It's normal to sometimes be annoyed, upset or angry. Of course, we should also give ourselves room to vent our anger, rather than internally suppressing our worries, anger and annoyance.

While we're on the topic of anger: I remember a student who reported in her journal that her mother had baked a delicious raspberry cake. Two pieces were left for the next day, one for the student and one for her little sister. When the student returned home in the evening after a long day at university, quite exhausted and eager to enjoy her piece of raspberry cake, she found out that her sister had eaten both pieces! In her meditation journal, she wrote, "In this case, even loving kindness doesn't help any more." But, that



Raspberry cake,  
sisters and  
a happy ending.

evening she tried the practice of loving kindness after all, sending some to her little sister. This doesn't mean that she "forgave" her little sister, but the student tried to rise above it and was even able to fall asleep reasonably relaxed.

The story continues, and has a happy ending. Two days later, out of compassion, the little sister baked a raspberry cake herself to share with her big sister and her mother.

## Connectedness with all that exists

Another variant of loving kindness emphasizes not only the connection with other people, but also with animals, plants and other living beings on earth. The radius can be extended to include places, cities, countries, continents and the earth as well as planets and stars or even the entire universe.

### An exercise that we used in class goes like this:

**"Imagine a feeling of deep inner well-being and satisfaction. Perhaps you remember a particularly beautiful situation from your life. Immerse yourself now in this feeling. Once you have established a good connection to the feeling, expand it in space. In doing so, visualize that the people and other living beings who are in the same room are also enveloped by this feeling."**

You can expand this exercise by extending the benevolent feeling even further: to the house or institution where the room is located. Or perhaps you could sit in the park and gradually expand the radius so that it eventually encompasses the entire park.

*All of spiritual practice is a matter of relationship:  
to ourselves, to others, to life's situations.  
We can relate with a spirit of wisdom, compassion,  
and flexibility, or we can meet life with fear, aggression,  
and delusion. Whether we like it or not, we are always  
in relationship, always interconnected.*

Jack Kornfield

## The unity of humanity

Another variant is to imagine people in other places, cities, countries, continents, who, just like you, go about their daily lives. Perhaps you have acquaintances in another country, whom you can have in mind when you visualize a certain area of expansion. Or you visualize the images that you know from the media. Although people are different and individual, we also have a lot in common. People take care of their families, play with their children, love soccer or are enthusiastic about other sports, enjoy being with friends, work to earn a living. All people want to be happy. Some have decent living conditions, others very challenging ones. By visualizing connectedness and pouring out well-being and love, we can experience the fundamental unity of humanity.

## Cells, stars, universe

Including the universe as the object of our practice can have a profound effect on our sense of inner peace and security. When we think of the fact that there are billions of stars in the Milky Way, it's simply an inconceivable dimension. And in considering that our bodies are made up of trillions of cells, we are reminded that we're part of a larger whole.

There are many forms of Loving Kindness and Metta meditations, available through books, on CD, through the internet – it's best to just try them out and find what best suits you. Or invent your own form. The essence lies in the feeling of benevolence that is conveyed.

## Primary literature used for the lessons

Kornfield, Jack (2008). *The Art of Forgiveness, Lovingkindness, and Peace*. New York: Bantam Dell.

Kornfield, Jack (1993). *A Path with Heart. A Guide Through the Perils and Promises of Spiritual Life*. New York: Bantam Books.

Ricard, Matthieu (2010). *The Art of Meditation*. London: Atlantic Books.

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<sup>1</sup> Kaltwasser 2010, p. 87 ff. [Author's translation]. Reprinted with kind permission of Beltz Verlag and author.

# Journal Notes

## Loving Kindness

**A. B.**

**Time: 3:45-3:52 p.m. (7 min)**

**Place: waiting room (sitting)**

**Method: loving kindness**

**Tools: Teaching Studies Research\* text =**

**Tools: LSF\*-text “loving kindness”**

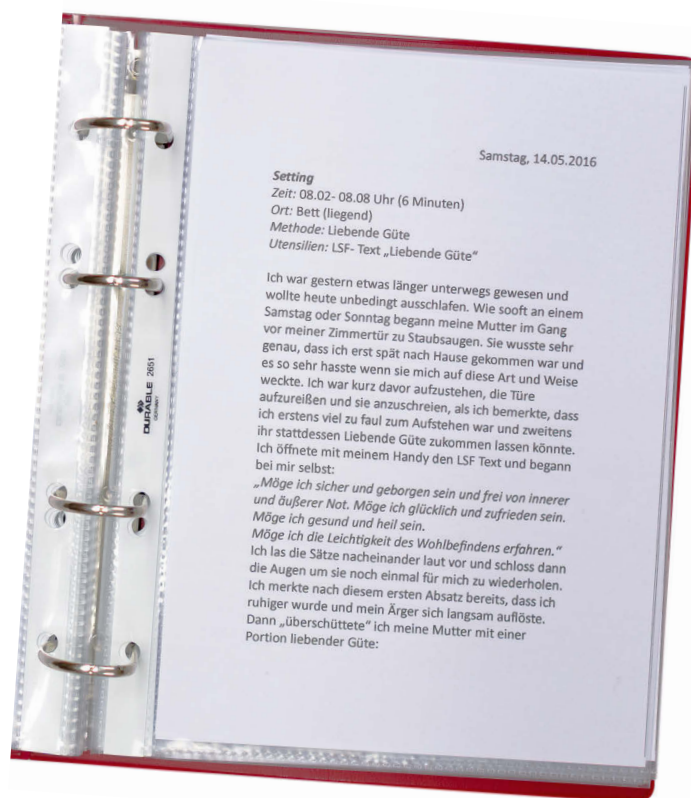
I had an appointment with the doctor at 3:30 p.m. The receptionist first sent me to the waiting room which was rather full. Next to me sat an elderly man who was constantly coughing and sneezing in my direction without putting his hand over his mouth. Every now and then I got a few drops of his spit in my face. Since I'm ill, I already wasn't in a very good mood today. I turned slightly away from the man to continue reading my book in peace.

Shortly after me, two more patients entered the waiting room. Both were called into the treatment rooms before me, although I had an appointment that was clearly ahead of them. Due to the volume of a couple's conversation in another corner of the waiting room, I could hardly concentrate on reading. I noticed that I was becoming increasingly angry and dissatisfied with the situation. The man who spat at me, the patients who came before me, and the couple's loud conversation were too much for me.

I was on the verge of rescheduling my appointment when I remembered our seminar session today where we had discussed the technique of “loving kindness”. With my cell phone I downloaded the file from the LSF. I read the sentences to myself one by one, and then repeated them with my eyes closed. So I tipped a bucket of loving kindness over the man sitting next to me, over the couple, over the other patients and over the receptionist. I noticed how my anger decreased after the exercises and I felt more balanced and resilient. I even gave the newly arriving patients a smile and a cheerful “Grüß Gott”.

I realized that aggression in this situation would not have been helpful at all. For me, the exercise worked very well and at the same time shortened the waiting time..

\* LSF – the university portal for students, guests, teachers and employees – LMU Munich



**Sunday, 5/14/16**

**Time: 8:02-8:08 a.m. (6 min)**

**Place: bed (lying down)**

**Method: loving kindness**

**Tools: LSF\*-text “loving kindness”**

I was up really late last night, so I really wanted to sleep in this morning. As it's often the case on a Saturday or Sunday, my mother began vacuuming the corridor in front of the door to my room. She knew very well that I'd come home late and hated it so much when she woke me up this way. I was just about to get up, rip open the door and yell at her when I realized that, firstly, I was too lazy to get up and, secondly, I could just send her loving kindness instead.

I opened the LSF text with my cell phone and started saying to myself:

“May I be safe and secure and free from internal and external distress. May I be happy and content. May I be healthy and whole. May I experience the lightness of well-being.”

I read the sentences aloud one after the other and then closed my eyes to repeat them again to myself. After this first paragraph I already noticed that I became calmer and my anger slowly dissolved. Then I “showered” my mother with a dose of loving kindness.



Metta "Liebende Güte"

22:40 Uhr

Wo: im Bett, vor dem Einschlafen

Zunächst habe ich die Übung bei mir durchgeführt. Im Anschluss wand ich die Übung bei einer älteren Freundin, <sup>mit</sup> der ich keinen Kontakt mehr habe, an. Vor der Übung empfand ich "negative" Gefühle gegenüber ihr, weil ich ihr vor zwei Jahren 100 € geliehen habe da sie ~~er~~ in Not war. Gedanken kamen auf und wollten sie "verfluchen", weil sie sie mir bis jetzt nicht zurückgegeben hat obwohl sie ständig auf Reisen ist und diese 100€ locker besitzt. Mir ist die Liebende Güte Übung eingefallen und hatte das Bedürfnis anders zu reagieren, als sonst bisher. Immerhin bringt es mir nur "negative" Gefühle für mich und das bringt nichts. Während der Übung war es etwas komisch, ihr den Güteeimer über zu schütten, da ich das Geld schon zurückhaben möchte, jedoch auch sehr schön, da ihre Person selbst aus weitaus mehr "besteht" als nur mir das Geld nicht zu geben. Deswegen möchte ich nicht sie im Ganzen "verfluchen" oder kritisieren. Im Gegenteil, der Gedanke, ihr trotzdem etwas gutes zu wünschen, ist sehr schön.

**C. W.****Metta, loving kindness****10:40 p.m.****Where: in bed, before falling asleep**

At first I did the exercise by myself. Then I applied the exercise to an older friend with whom I have no contact anymore. Before doing the exercise I had felt "negative" feelings towards her because I lent her 100 euros two years ago as she was in need. Thoughts came up and I wanted to "curse" her because she hasn't yet paid me back, although she's always travelling and she clearly has this 100 euros.

The loving kindness exercise came to my mind and I felt the need to respond differently than before. After all, it only promotes "negative" feelings, and that's not helpful. During the exercise, it was a bit strange to pour the "bucket of goodness" over her, since I really want the money back. On the other hand, [it also felt] very nice, because there is much more to her character than just her not having returned the money. So I don't want to "curse" or criticize her on the whole. Instead, it's a very beautiful thought to wish her something good anyway.

Donnerstag, 9.5.2019

Körper ruhig & friedvoll / Geist ruhig & friedvoll  
17:30 Uhr ca. 10-15 Minuten  
beim Zahnarzt

Da ich aufgeregt und etwas ängstlich beim Zahnarzt bin und eine Untersuchung bzgl. eines Eingriffs mit Spritze bevorsteht habe ich die Zeit im Wartezimmer und auf dem Behandlungsstuhl genutzt um mich mit der Atemtechnik zu beruhigen. Zunächst habe ich mehrere Minuten meinen Körper beim Ein- und Ausatmen berührt. Im Anschluss meinen Geist. Zu Beginn war es sehr schwierig, da ich immer wieder Bilder von Spritzen etc. vor mir hatte und während dem Warten auf dem Behandlungsstuhl die Werkzeuge liegen gesehen habe. Mit der Zeit wurde es jedoch besser. Ich konnte mich mit viel Mühe auf meinen Atem konzentrieren und den Gedankenstrudel verlassen. Unsicher war ich trotzdem, jedoch deutlich weniger. Zumal die eigentliche Behandlung erst in einem halben Jahr sein wird. Zuvor werde ich mit Sicherheit meditieren!

**E. B.**

[This is] a favorite exercise for when I'm angry. Especially when I feel that someone has been really unfair to me or I feel humiliated or excluded, this exercise is so far the only coping strategy I have. When I am "at peace" with myself again, I can forgive and things don't have so much to do with me anymore, and I can take back my ego.

**H. K.****Saturday, 6/29/13, 7:30 a.m.**

Since I was awake so early but didn't want to get up yet, I decided to perform loving kindness. I could quite quickly put aside my negative thoughts, self-reproaches and doubts and give the other people and myself something so beautiful, and wish them a good day. Afterwards I could fall asleep again, relaxed and calm.

**P. S.****Sunday, 11/26/16, at my home****approx. 7 min****Method: loving kindness**

On Sunday I decided to finish out the week with a meditation of loving-kindness. I like this form very much and I was able to really relax.

### Liebende Güte

Eine Lieblingsübung, wenn ich wütend bin. Gerade wenn ich das Gefühl habe, dass jemand richtig unfair zu mir war oder ich mich erniedrigt oder ausgeschlossen fühle, ist diese Übung bis jetzt auch die einzige Bewältigungsstrategie, die ich habe. Wenn ich dann mit mir selbst wieder im "Leeren" bin, kann ich erreichen was die Dinge haben nicht mehr so viel mit mir zu tun und ich kann mein Ego zurücknehmen.

As an example of a loving person, I've chosen my mom. Since she had her birthday only recently and she does so much good for our family (especially spoiling me with delicious food, doing laundry when I'm sometimes home again on weekends), she really deserves the positive thoughts.

As a neutral person, the man from the Munich Student Union who arranged an apartment for me at the Olympic Center spontaneously came to mind. I'm really very grateful to him.

And for a second loving person, I chose my Latin tutor. She had a school assignment this week and so I thought about her a lot. Hopefully my warm words helped her to master her exam in a relaxed way and without much fear, and to do her best (hopefully a good result will come out of it).

**Wednesday, 12/14/16, about 10 min**

### **Apartment Munich**

#### **Method: loving kindness**

I dared to do loving kindness again today because I was really very upset towards someone today. I didn't think about loving kindness right away at that moment, but when I went home and reviewed my day, I had to do it. On my way to the university today, I was in a real hurry and had to first do some shopping at the supermarket. As there was an older woman in front of me at the check-out and she put her items very slowly into the cart after paying, while she also spoke very animatedly to the saleswoman, I missed my subway train and had to wait 10 minutes. Because of a delay, I barely made it to class on time and was already quite stressed by then.

At home, after some time had passed, I then sent warm thoughts to the person, which was really not easy for me. Maybe next time I'll just have to leave earlier and plan for such "incidents".

### **W. W.**

Normally I don't have many problems with other people, but some of them just get you upset.

One of my work colleagues doesn't seem to like me very much. But you have to get along. I always try to be very polite and friendly to her. But sometimes it's extremely difficult when very little kindness comes back from the other person. Last night I thought about the loving kindness exercise. I simply tried to remember that one shouldn't really be angry with people, because they usually treat others badly because they have problems themselves. These people can't really be happy, so one should wish for them to find their happiness and satisfaction.

Therefore, I've tried to have a big "bucket" of loving kindness left for them and to send it to them figuratively. Of course this is not always easy, but it's absolutely the best solution for solving conflicts and maybe even help to support other people in this way. I will do my best to continue to act in this way, and perhaps also to apply the loving kindness exercise more often.

Woche 6  
14.05 20.05

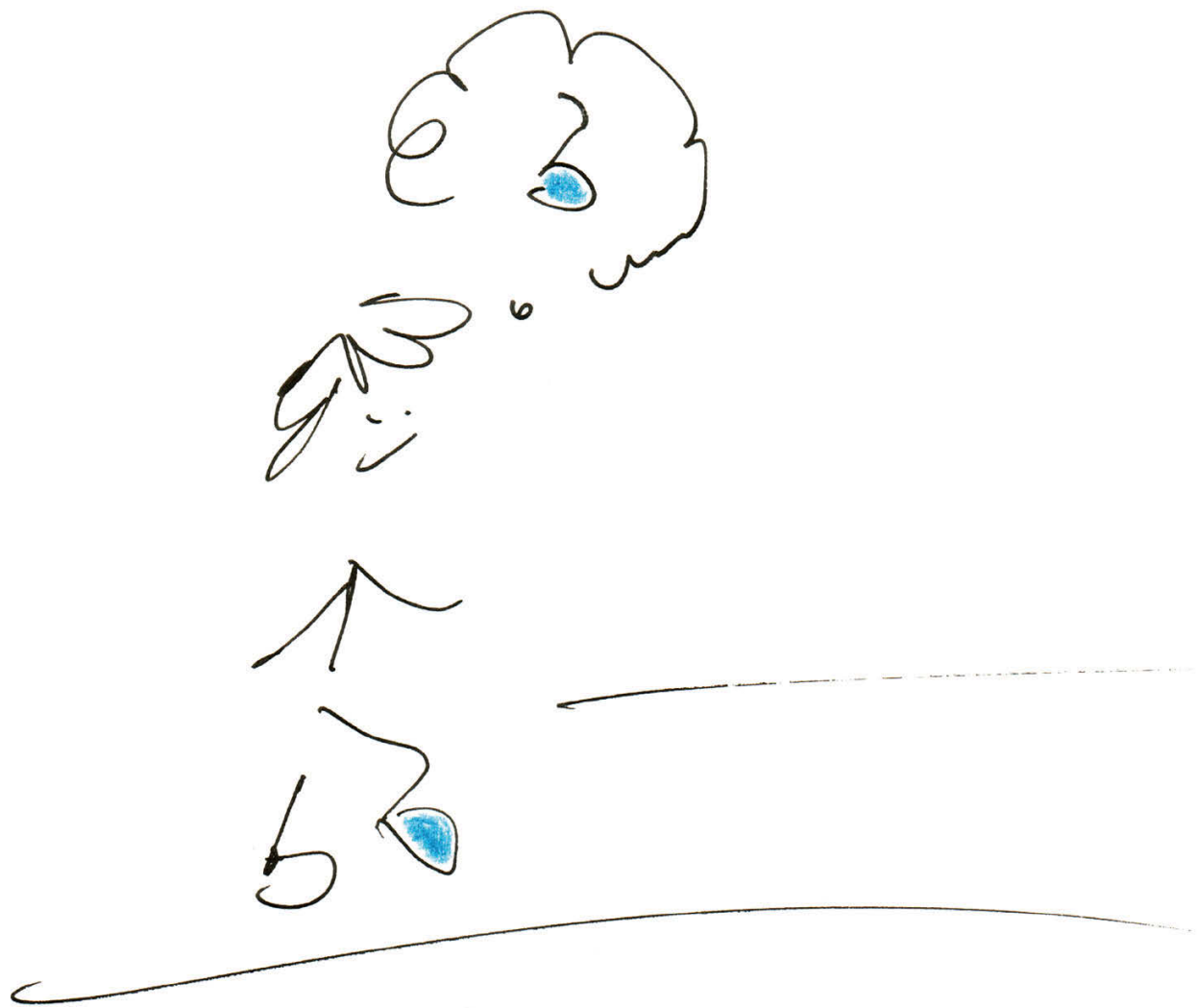
MONTAG

Normalerweise habe ich mit anderen Menschen nicht sehr viele Probleme, aber manche bringen eine einfach auf die Palme. Eine meiner Arbeitskolleginnen scheint mich nicht großartig zu mögen. Doch man muss ja auskommen. Ich versuche immer sehr höflich und freundlich zu ihr zu sein. Doch das fällt manchmal extrem schwer, wenn von der anderen Seite sehr wenig Freundlichkeit zurückkommt. Gestern Abend musste ich an die Übung Liebende Güte denken. Ich habe also einfach versucht daran zu denken, dass man den Menschen nicht wirklich böse sein kann, da sie doch meistens aus Problemen mit sich selbst, andere schlecht behandeln. Diese Menschen könne nicht wirklich glücklich sein, weshalb man ihnen er wünschen sollte, dass sie ihr Glück und ihre Zufriedenheit zu finden. Also habe ich versucht einen großen „Eimer“ Liebende Güte für die übrig zu haben und ihr bildlich zu übergeben. Sowas fällt natürlich nicht immer leicht, aber die absolut beste Lösung Konflikte zu lösen und anderen Menschen vielleicht sogar somit zu helfen und sie zu unterstützen. Ich werde mein Bestes geben weiterhin so zu handeln und vielleicht auch die Übung Liebenden Güte des Öfteren anzuwenden.

SONNTAG

Da diese Woche etwas stressig war, habe ich das Meditieren leider vernachlässigt. Was sehr schade ist, da es doch nicht zu meiner Routine dazu gehört. Gerade deshalb bin ich über die Dienstagsstunde sehr dankbar, da diese mir immer wieder Anreiz verschafft, um dranzubleibe und mir auch immer ein sehr gutes Gefühl gibt.





Bringing awareness to the feet: the walking meditation.

# Walking Meditation

Have you ever been in a hurry and the person in front of you was unconsciously walking much slower and moving erratically so far between left and right that it was impossible to overtake them?

There are also situations when people must focus consciously on walking correctly, for example: when they learn to walk for the first time as a child; when they have to learn to walk again after an accident; or if one's profession relates to this subject, as in the case of physiotherapists and occupational therapists.

*The first thing to do is to lift your foot.*

*Breathe in.*

*Put your foot down in front of you,  
first your heel and then your toes.*

*Breathe out.*

*Feel your feet solid on the Earth.*

*You have already arrived.*

Thich Nhat Hanh

While working on my doctorate at LMU Munich, I regularly studied at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek [*Bavarian State Library*] together with a friend. I was not always very focused. At times, I'd let myself be mentally distracted by what was going on in the library. For example, I'd amuse myself in a "game" – could we guess the degree program of someone by merely observing their gait? This is just what we tried to do! Without looking at them, we guessed our fellow students' majors from the way they appeared to move as they passed by. It went like this: close your eyes. Listen carefully to the manner in which those students, walking past you, step and move: do they shuffle; are they hasty; do they move slowly or quickly; do they rumble or are they quiet, etc. Opening your eyes, write down what you guess their major is. Then, take a look at those who just passed by. Check your conclusion: was it law, business, philosophy or perhaps even political science?

Naturally, this "game" has its limitations, and one shouldn't generalize or stereotype; in all degree programs of course different approaches to walking can be observed. In noting this game, my intention is to illustrate that the way we walk and move is also influenced by other things; subjects we deal with and identify with, our daily habits, our emotions, etc. And since walking is routine, it's something we don't consciously think about; we just do it.

In walking meditation, all of one's conscious attention is focused on one's own walk.

Moderator: "When I lift my foot, what part of it is the last to touch the ground? When do I pick up the other foot? How does the knee move? What part of my foot touches the ground first when I put it down? We'll now try this out, taking our time. Our manner is calm and focused."

Try out walking meditation

Moderator: "What was your experience?"

Reponse 1: "Well, it helped me just to pay attention to walking."

Reponse 2: "It was difficult to find my own pace because there were so many people in the room."

Reponse 3: "I had the feeling that I was out of balance."

Moderator: "Did you notice any other thoughts?"

Reponse 1: "Now and then."

Reponse 2: "No, I was very focussed."

Reponse 3: "I was only aware of my feet and the other people."

Moderator: "Did you also remember to breathe? Did you notice how many steps you took each breath?"

A second part of the exercise is counting your breaths as you walk. How many steps fall in one breath?

Moderator demonstrates: "For example, 2 steps in one breath upon inhaling and 2 steps in one breath upon exhaling."

But this can be different for everyone. Let's try this out, we now have three points to consider: steps, breathing and counting.

However, if for some reason it doesn't feel good or you don't like it, you can do the walking meditation without counting the breath, as before.

Try out walking meditation while counting your breath.

Moderator: "And how did that exercise go?"

Reponse 1: "It was difficult. I got mixed up."

Reponse 2: "For me, it was good."

Reponse 3: "I found it strange. I can't yet say more."

Reponse 4: "I didn't like it. I'd rather do the exercise without counting my breath."

Moderator: "Who was also able to count at the same time?"

Reponse 1: "I took two steps on one breath, inhaling and exhaling."

Reponse 2: "I took two steps on the inhale and three on the exhale."

Reponse 3: "I walked slowly: one breath per step."

Reponse 4: "I walked faster, taking four steps upon the inhale, and three upon the exhale."

Moderator: "Why should one combine this practice with the breath?"

Reponse 1: "It's easier to concentrate."

Reponse 2: "All you can think about is walking and counting."



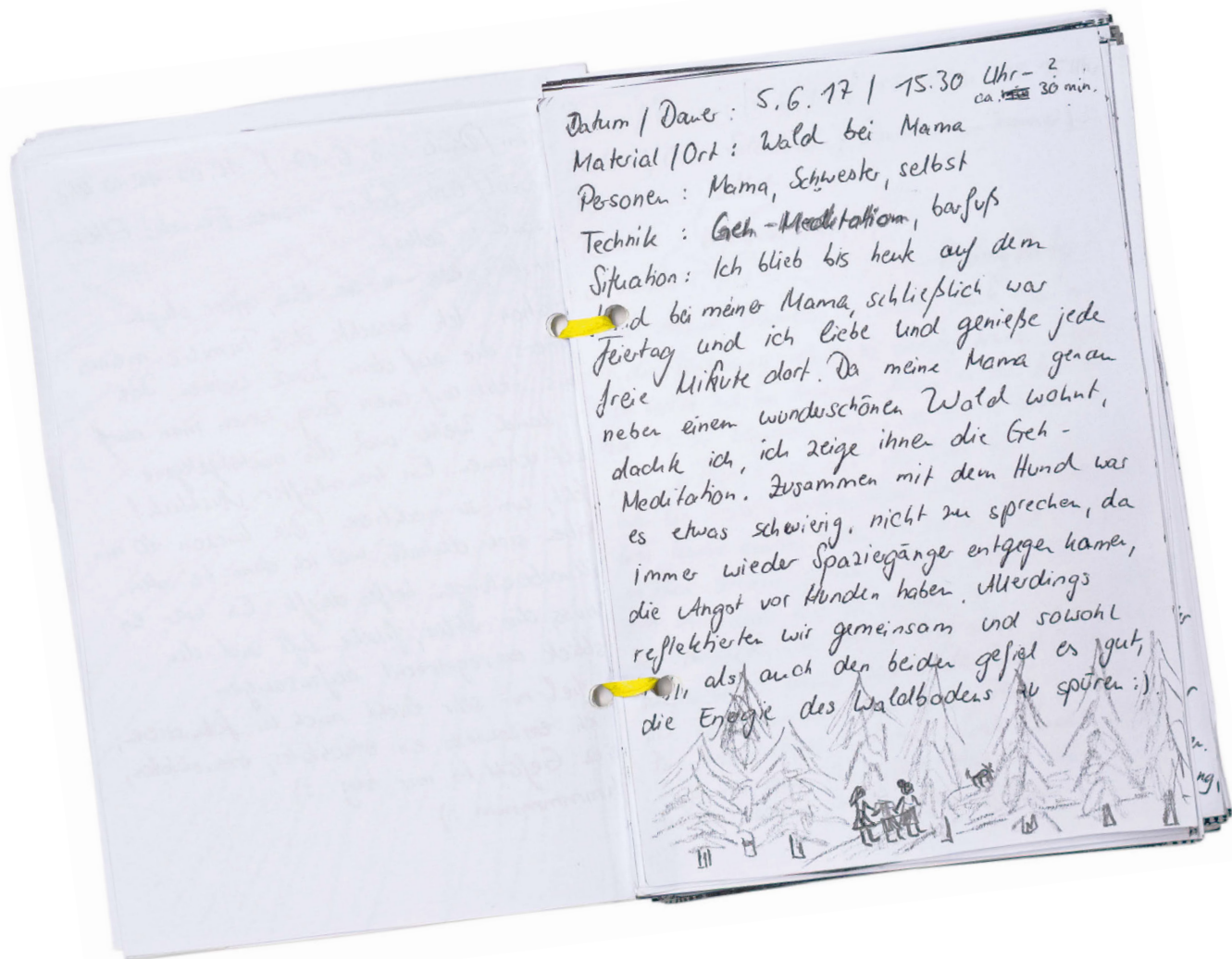
Walking meditation can also be practiced in everyday life – for example, on the way home, during a walk in the woods, on the way to an appointment, or to the university. It can be practiced even just before an exam – before entering the room and starting the exam; it offers a chance to relax your mind for a few minutes.

You can practice the walking meditation slowly or a little faster, with or without counting your breath or steps, as you like it. It's all about focus, and that focus is on walking.

### Primary literature used for the lessons

Thich Nhat Hanh (2016). *How to Walk*. London: Rider.

Thich Nhat Hanh / Anh-Huong, Nguyen (2006). *Walking Meditation*. Boulder: Sounds True, Inc. [with CD and DVD]



## Gehmeditation

30.10.17

Ein Spaziergang mit dem Hund  
 so möglich oft eine kurze Meditation.  
 Die Stille im Wald oder auf der Wiese  
 lassen die Gedanken verschwinden.  
 Durch die Betrachtung der Natur  
 und die Fokussierung eines Objekts  
 z.B. ein Baum, lassen die Gedanken  
 verschwinden.

andere Ged.

Woche vom 07.11.16 - 13.11.16

Als ich gerade auf dem Weg vom Bahnhof  
 zu meiner Familie war, fiel mir ein, dass  
 ich doch die Gehmeditation machen könnte.  
 Also schaute ich auf den Boden zu meinen  
 Füßen und versuchte ausschließlich an diese  
 und das Gehen zu denken. Ich merkte, dass  
 ich mich automatisch langsamer und gezielter  
 bewegte und ließ es wieder normal  
 gehend aussehen zu lassen. Dann fiel mir  
 ein, dass ich die Atmung noch dazu tun  
 könnte, was ich auch tat. Wieder kam  
 mir das Gehen zu „gestellt“ vor, dass ich mich  
 zwang einfach nur zu gehen und zu atmen,  
 gehen und atmen, gehen und atmen...  
 irgendwann konnte ich aufhören an diesen  
 Satz denken zu müssen und ich dachte  
 ausschließlich an das Gehen. Nur leider,  
 als es dann ganz gut klappte, fing es  
 an zu regnen und der Wind wurde  
 stärker. Dann musste ich abbrechen.  
 Mir ist klar geworden, dass es draußen  
 viel mehr Dinge gibt, die einen ablenken.  
 Im Raum, wo jeder das selbe getan hat,  
 ist es mir viel leichter gefallen, mich auf  
 das Gehen <sup>allein</sup> zu konzentrieren. Auch den  
 SchülerInnen könnte ich mir vorstellen,

# Journal Notes

## Walking Meditation

**A. P. Z.**

**10/30/17, walking meditation**

Walking the dog often gives me the opportunity for a short meditation. The silence of the forest or the meadow allows my thoughts to disappear. By observing nature and focusing on an object, for example a tree, my thoughts disappear.

**A. v. W.**

On the way from the train station to my family, I thought that I might as well practise walking meditation. So looking down at my feet, I tried to focus only on them and on walking. I noticed that my movement automatically slowed down and became more deliberate, and I resumed walking normally again. Then it occurred to me that I could do the breathing in addition to what I was doing. Again the walking seemed to be too “forced” –that I was just forcing myself to walk and breathe, walk and breathe, walk and breathe ... At some point I was able to stop thinking about this sentence and I thought only about walking. Only unfortunately, just as it was working quite well, it started to rain and the wind picked up. I had to stop then. It became clear that there are a lot of things that can distract one outside. It was much easier for me to concentrate just on walking in the room where everyone was doing the same thing.

**F. G.**

**Date / Duration: 6/5/17, 3:30 p.m.**

**about 30 min**

**Material / location: the woods by mom's place**

**People: mom, sister, myself.**

**Technique: walking meditation, barefoot**

**Situation:** Up to now I've been in the countryside with my mom, as it's a holiday and I love and enjoy every free minute there. As my mom lives right next to a beautiful forest, I thought I would show her how to do the walking meditation. Our dog was with us, so it was a bit difficult not to talk, because there were often people, who are afraid of dogs, walking towards us. Still reflecting together, we all felt good to feel the energy of the forest floor.

**J. Z.**

**11/8/14**

**Walking meditation from the university to my home, 3:45 p.m.**

I gave the walking meditation a try while on my way home from university, in the afternoon. I tried hard to pay attention to my gait and the sensations in my feet. I felt the ground under the soles of my shoes and perceived the different surfaces more intensively. I let everything else around me fade out. I first went down the stairs of the stairwell in the university building, noticing that in order to keep my balance, I had to concentrate to place my feet precisely on the steps. The floor was hard and in some places sticky. My right foot was still tingling a bit, as it had fallen asleep during the seminar. My left big toe was pressing against my shoe. I paid attention to the noises my shoes made on the different floors. The stairs outside the building were more slippery and also wider, so I had to take 1.5 steps for each of the stairs, which didn't match my natural “walking rhythm”. On the escalator I could easily feel the grooved steps. My legs felt heavy and tired after a long and exhausting day. In the subway I was able to sit down, to relieve my legs. I stretched out my legs and moved my toes in my shoes. They pressed lightly at the sides. I got off at my stop and walked up the stairs. I took one step at a time. Walking along the sidewalk to my house I tried not to step on the lines between the square sections, but to keep my feet within the squares. Then I had to walk through a small park, along a gravel path, and could hear the rattling of the pebbles under my shoes. Lastly I walked across a patch of meadow covered in leaves, listening to the rustle of leaves under my feet. The stairs to my apartment felt slippery and squeaked under the soles of my shoes. Arriving at my apartment, I was finally able to take off my shoes, freeing my feet from their confinement. That felt good. I've never before been so focused on my way home, but from now on I plan to do this exercise more often.



**04.06.17** 11:00 → ca. 45 min: Gehmeditation

Endlich bin ich mal wieder in Italien. Ich habe mich die letzten Wochen schon so richtig auf den Toskana-Urlaub zusammen mit meiner Familie gefreut. Unsere Unterkunft ist gleich am Meer. Ich ging heute Vormittag etwa 45 min. am Strand von Cecina spazieren. Es tut gut die Sonne, den Wind, die salzige Meerluft auf der Haut zu spüren. Ich ging langsam und achtete auf meinen Gang. Setzte bewusst ein Fuß vor den anderen, spürte das Wasser an meinen Füßen. Es war ein tolles Gefühl am Meer entlang zu gehen. Nach dem Spaziergang fühlte ich mich richtig frei und erfrischt.

### L. R.

**6/4/17, 11:00 a.m., approx. 45 min,**  
**walking meditation**

Finally, I'm back in Italy. For the last few weeks I've been really looking forward to my holiday in Tuscany with my family. Our accommodations are right by the sea. This morning I walked for about 45 minutes on the beach of Cecina. It's good to feel the sun, the wind, the salty sea air on my skin. I walked slowly, paying attention to my walk I deliberately put one foot in front of the other. I felt the water on my feet. It was a great feeling to walk alongside the sea. After the walk, I felt really free and refreshed.

**5/29/17, 6:00 p.m., approx. 30 min,**  
**walking meditation**

After the seminar, due to the beautiful weather, I decided to walk along Leopoldstrasse to Odeonsplatz and then to Marienplatz. I wore my favorite summer sandals and made sure to walk consciously. I went slower than usual, and consciously rolling my feet while walking stabilized me in my posture and gait. I felt a feeling of security within me. The thought "I'm on my own path" was

**06.06.17** 21:00 → ca. 5 min: Kerzen-Meditation

An diesem Abend machten wir ein kleines Lagerfeuer im Garten vor unserer Wohnung in Cecina. Ich schloss für 5 min. die Augen und meditierte. Ich nahm das Knistern des Feuers und die Wärme auf meiner Haut wahr. Ich stellte mir innerlich das Licht des Feuers vor. Dann öffnete ich die Augen. Schaute noch eine Weile in die flackernden Flammen. Ich spürte den inneren Frieden in mir.

very present during my walking meditation. Arriving at Marienplatz, I could have continued. Instead, feeling renewed, I made my way home by train. After the long day at university, I was looking forward to a nice dinner with my family.

### M. M.

**Walking meditation in nature**

**When: Wednesday, December 3rd, 2014,**  
**8:15 to 8:50 a.m.**

**Where: in Gilching (sidewalk next to meadows and trees)**

**Why: to start the day feeling more relaxed**

**How:**

- Before going outside, I listen to the CD "Walking Meditation in Nature" by Thich Nhat Hanh and Nguyen Anh-Huong.
- In the open air I imagine myself standing as a tree and feeling the connection with the earth under my feet, which isn't easy for me.
- I begin and start by "inhaling" for two steps and "exhaling" for three steps.
- I feel the fresh, cool, humid air on my face, making me feel more alert.
- I say upon inhaling: "in, in, in", upon exhaling: "out, out, out." I realize that I can't manage to continue it, and I stop.

- I notice that my steps feel less hurried than usual, my stomach gradually relaxes, I become calmer.
- While inhaling I now say to myself “I have arrived”, while exhaling “I am home” – I have a reassuring feeling of satisfaction.
- While walking I notice the different colours. There’s a lot of clover growing in the meadow. On the leaves there are many silvery drops of water of different sizes.
- I think of getting out my camera and taking some nice pictures

## N. H.

**Time: 6:30 p.m.**

**Duration: approx. 30 min.**

**Place: outside – walk in the forest**

**Type of meditation: Walking meditation**

**How did it go?**

After we were introduced to walking meditation in yesterday’s seminar, I tried it right away today. In general I often go for a walk outside in the fresh air in the evening, which is very relaxing for me and allows me to switch off. So I already expected that walking meditation would be a good method for me. And it was! I took a stroll through a small wood near my home. Normally it takes me 15 minutes to walk back along this path. Today I needed twice the time. Step by step I slowly rolled off each foot adjusting my steps to my breathing. I was surprised at how many details and features of the forest floor I consciously noticed.

**Meditation 11/23/15**

**Time: 11:45 a.m.**

**Duration: 3 min**

**Location: way to the university**

**Type of meditation: walking meditation**

**How’d it go?**

I was on my way to the university and very nervous, because I was supposed to give a presentation during my seminar at 12:00 p.m. On the way from the subway to the seminar room I concentrated only on myself, my feet and my breathing. I slowed down my pace a bit and put one foot in front of the other. I took care to concentrate only on my gait and breathing. I breathed deeply into my chest and belly and slowly rolled my feet from heel to toe. In this way I was able to calm myself down.

## P. S.

**Thursday, 12/8/16, at my home, approx. 7 min**

**Result: walking meditation**

On the way to see the student I tutor, I decided to practice walking meditation. As it had been a bit stressful for me this morning (cleaning, cooking for my sister, washing) I wanted to arrive more relaxed and at ease for my student. I wasn’t able to walk as slowly as I do in a room at home (doing so would have attracted people’s attention), but I still tried to walk as slowly as possible following a rhythm. In the beginning it was hard for me to find a good rhythm and to look down at my feet – normally I pay more attention to the surroundings – but halfway down the path it continued to improve. I even counted the steps.

During the walking meditation it did me a lot of good to concentrate only on walking and to fade out the vortex of thoughts “in my head” completely. I really didn’t think of anything else and completely forgot that my mom was there. She also tried the meditation, and she liked it very much for the beginning.

## T. K.

**6/29/19, mindful walking / walking meditation**

**At home in the village while walking Gassi**

This morning I had to walk the dog, so I thought I would combine it with mindful walking this time, before continuing with my BA thesis again. This worked wonderfully, despite the dog. It’s probably because I didn’t have him on a leash and so he had his freedom and couldn’t pull. I already found mindful walking very interesting during the exercise during the lecture, but unfortunately I have not repeated it until now. But this will change in the future. I noticed that afterwards I was much more focused than I usually am after the meditations. I’ll now do mindful walking more often instead of regular meditation and see what better suits me in the long run.

## T. O.

**Where: in the forest**

**When: approx. 2:00 p.m.**

**What / how:** My boyfriend and I went for a walk in the forest this afternoon. I wanted to do the walking meditation and he was interested in it too. So, I explained to him how the practice works and combined with the breathing, it was much easier for me in the fresh air. I did the walking meditation for about 20 minutes, then I couldn’t concentrate anymore. My boyfriend didn’t do it for that long, but in general he liked the exercise.





Pigeons at Munich's Central Station need braking distance.

# Sutras

Sutras are verses from discourses, often used for meditation. In class we use several exercises related to the the Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing from the book *Breathe, you are alive!* by Thich Nhat Hanh. In it, he describes 16 of these exercises, and links them to the breath. They are recited at a slow pace or repeated inwardly.

Sutras develop the ability to concentrate and enable a deep awareness.<sup>1</sup>

In the classroom we covered the following exercises:

“Breathing in, I calm my whole body. Breathing out, I calm my whole body.”<sup>2</sup>

“Breathing in, I liberate my mind. Breathing out, I liberate my mind.”<sup>3</sup>

These exercises are easy to put into practice. They don’t take much time, and they can be used almost anywhere.

*The more deeply we observe, the greater our mental concentration becomes. Stopping and collecting our mind, we naturally become able to see.*

Thich Nhat Hanh

In 2018, during a 7:00 a.m. early morning interview by the Bavarian Television at Munich’s Central Station, I was asked if I was also able to meditate standing in the station hall amongst people passing by, with the incoming trains. They thought it would make a great starting scene; they’d let the camera run and then after a short time approach me to begin the interview. I agreed, briefly considering which technique I could best use to keep my focus. The exercise related to Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing came to mind. So I quietly repeated to myself, “Breathing in, I liberate my mind. Breathing out, I liberate my mind.” It worked.

Unfortunately, we had to repeat the scene three times. First the sound wasn’t working and twice too many people passed between the camera and me. By the third attempt, my perception had changed. Everything had more intensity and I could see everything much more clearly and more in focus. I suddenly noticed the pigeons in the hall, closely watching how they landed. I observed that they always needed a very long braking distance when landing because the floor there is very slippery. Although I frequently visit Munich Central Station, I’ve never noticed this before. This exercise had significantly increased my awareness of the present moment.

In class, we sometimes use the another exercise:

“Breathing in, I observe letting go. Breathing out, I observe letting go.”<sup>4</sup>

If you repeat this sentence often, you’ll notice that the meaning of the words intensifies. The expression “letting go” has many facets. I can let go of superfluous possessions, which is fairly easy. I can also let go of things that at first I don’t want to let go of, but circumstances force me to. Or it may even be that I lose someone, for example because a relationship ends or someone dies. And last but not least, I can let go of my thought patterns and conditioning.

Afterwards, in class, we discuss our experiences with the exercises.

My students have also developed their own variations, for example: “I breathe in and know that I am valued. I breathe out and know that I am valued.”

### Primary literature used for the lessons

Thich Nhat Hanh (2008). *Breathe, you are alive! The Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing*. Berkeley: Parallax Press.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Thich Nhat Hanh 2008, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh 2008, p. 12 and p. 53 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh 2008, p. 13 and p. 65 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh 2008, p. 13 and p. 83 ff.

# Journal Notes

## Sutras

**A. U.**

**Friday, 12/18/15**

**When: approx. 6:30 p.m.**

**What: Sutra Meditation**

**Where: In the car and while shopping**

Today it was already incredibly stressful in the morning and I hurried with everything so that I would be ready at 6 pm, because we were invited to a birthday party. I managed to be ready on time, but I was the only one ready. So I had to wait until we could leave. As it was now foreseeable that we would leave [the house] at least one hour later than planned, I decided to go out on a quick shopping errand. While I could still do something useful, I was incredibly angry. This was because I had been rushing all day and because I hate being late. After nothing helped, I tried the sutra “my mind is calm and peaceful” and said it to myself continuously, making the effort to breathe consciously. It took me at least half an hour to get really calm, but I had time!

**C. W.**

**Thursday, 5/9/19**

**Body calm and peaceful, mind calm and peaceful**

**5:30 p.m. about 10-15 minutes, at the dentist**

Since I am agitated and somewhat anxious at the dentist [office] and an examination for a procedure with an injection is imminent, I used the time in the waiting room and on the treatment chair to calm myself down with the breathing technique. First, I spent several minutes calming my body while breathing in and out. Afterwards my mind. In the beginning it was very difficult because I always had pictures of syringes etc. in front of me and while waiting in the treatment chair I saw the tools lying there. But with time it got better. I was able to concentrate on my breath with a lot of effort and ignore the vortex of thoughts. I was still insecure, but much less so. Especially since the actual treatment will be in half a year. I will meditate for sure before that!

**J. H.**

**Where: at home**

**What: sutras**

**How long: 10 min**

I wanted to try the sutras again – this time a roommate read the sentences aloud to me and I repeated them in my head. At the beginning, she thought it rather strange, but at the end she said she noticed that she felt a bit calmer. At first you only read the sentences over, but if you read them really attentively, they take on a different meaning.

**When: 5/25/17**

**What: sutras / breathing**

**How long: in total approx. 20 min**

Today I tried the sutras. At first I meditated for about 10-15 minutes and then I read numbers 3 – 6 aloud a couple of times. To be honest, I found it a little easier in class, because there the sentences were read aloud to us. This time, I had to open my eyes again and again to be able to read. Maybe that's why it's better to have the sentences read aloud to you. Nevertheless, I liked the way it felt and can imagine repeating it more frequently.

**M. L.**

**5/19/16**

Today we discussed the sutras in the classroom. Already on the journey home they proved to be very helpful. When another driver pulled out right in front of me, I immediately remembered: “I breathe in and let my mind become calm and peaceful. I breathe out and let my mind become calm and peaceful.” And indeed, I felt the fear of a [potential] accident and the anger towards the driver fade away.

**6/15/16**

In between all the stress for the upcoming exams, there's an exercise that I use pretty much every day: the sutras! I always feel quite a bit calmer afterwards. I can concentrate completely on myself and my breathing.

**N. H.**

**11/18/15**

**Duration: 2 min**

**Time: 7:30 a.m.**

**Place: car**

I was on my way to work. I drove my car today and of course I was stuck in a traffic jam during rush hour. I should be there at 8:00 a.m. The arrival time on my GPS was already after 8! I felt myself becoming impatient and grumpy. I knew I wouldn't make it on time, at 8:00 a.m! So, I tried to calm down a little bit. I said aloud the sentence: "I breathe in and let my body become calm and peaceful" 3 times loudly and slowly [...] and breathed in rhythm with it. That helped me to calm down a little bit. I had come to terms with the fact that I would be late. But through meditation I managed to arrive at work in a good mood.

**Time: 2:00 p.m.**

**Duration: 5 min**

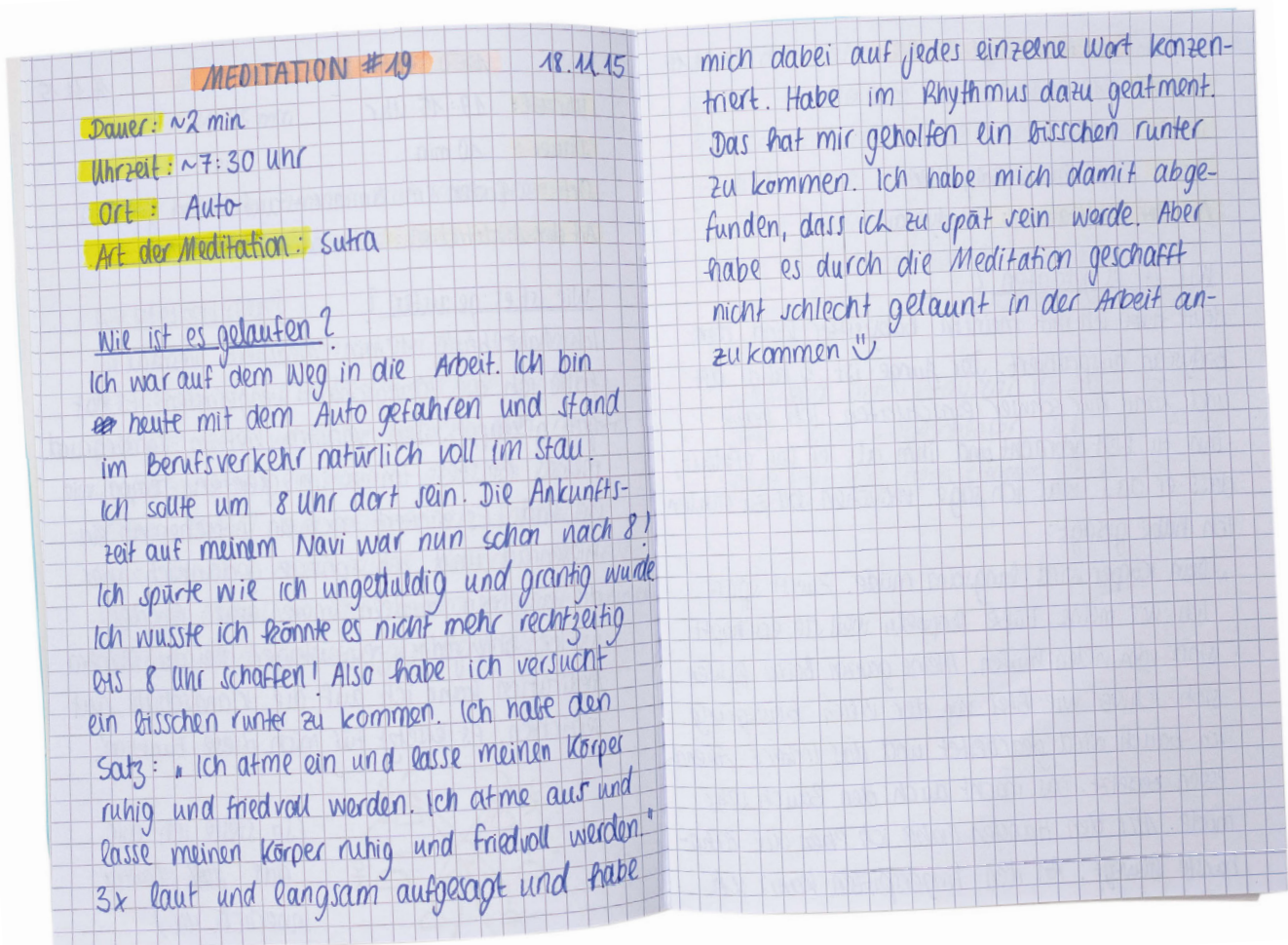
**Place: S-bahn [commuter train]**

**Type of meditation: sutra**

**How did it go?**

I was on my way home from university and I was going "a hundred and eighty" because I was running from lecturer to lecturer for my internship. Everyone said something different and everyone seemed overwhelmed by the situation. I think I myself was the most overwhelmed, because I just don't know where I'm going to go now. On the s-bahn, I closed my eyes and thought of the following sentence: "I breathe in and let my mind become calm and peaceful, I breathe out ...".

That helped me tremendously to calm down. I saw everything in a more relaxed way after that. Everyone is overwhelmed by this internship situation, not only me!

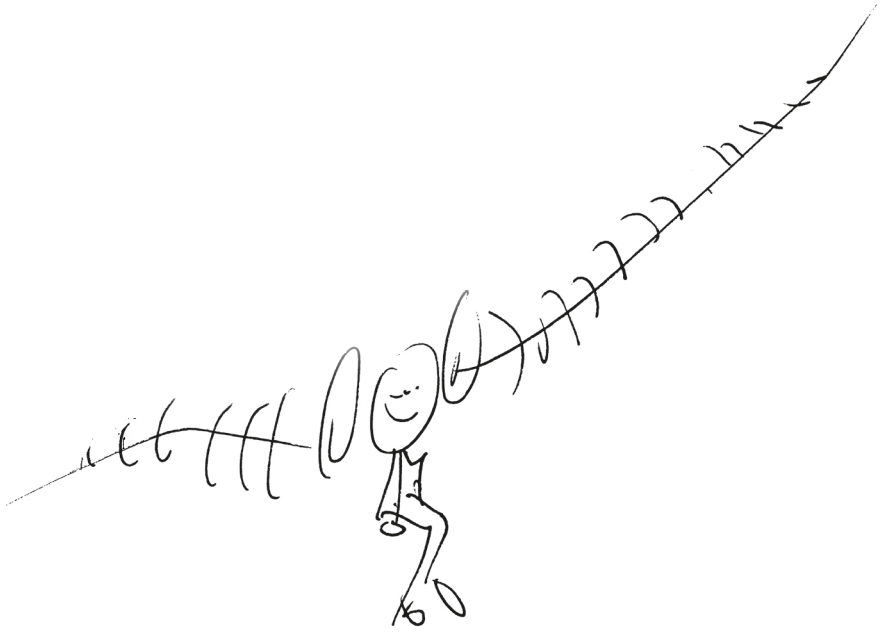




# Sound Meditation

*“Hearing draws in more,  
but seeing rather leads outward –  
the very act of seeing does this.  
Therefore in eternal life we shall rejoice  
far more in our power of hearing  
than in that of sight.”*

Meister Eckhart (1260–1327)



Conscious listening:  
near and far.

In daily life, the world around us is full of sounds. We're often not aware of these sounds, because we filter most of them out. But we can decide to heighten our perception, becoming more aware by consciously paying attention to the variety of sounds in a certain environment, or by intensifying our awareness of the quality of the sound.

In class, we often perform the following sound meditation:

## Instruction

We close our eyes. This allows us to block out any visual stimuli. Then we'll concentrate on the sounds – trying to consciously perceive them, one by one. We'll attempt to simply perceive the sounds, without interpreting them subjectively and without naming them. In this way we are immersed in a world of its own in which it's possible to discover many new things.

Is the sound loud or rather soft? Is it high or low? Is it soft or rather hard? Is the sound repeated or do you hear it only once? Does the sound have a melody or is it rather monotonous? Does it build up slowly or does it occur suddenly? Are there moments of absolute silence?

We will now first try to concentrate on sounds that are very far away – far outside the room we find ourselves in at the moment. Examples: cars, a plane in the distance, someone working in the garden with a saw ...

Now try concentrating on sounds that are still outside the room but closer. Examples: voices, people passing by, birds singing ...

Now pay attention to the sounds in the room you're in. Examples: radiators, people moving around, coughing, someone drinking water ...

And now concentrate on the sounds in your own body. Examples: breathing, body movements, a rumbling in your stomach, swallowing ...

And can you maybe even hear your own thoughts?

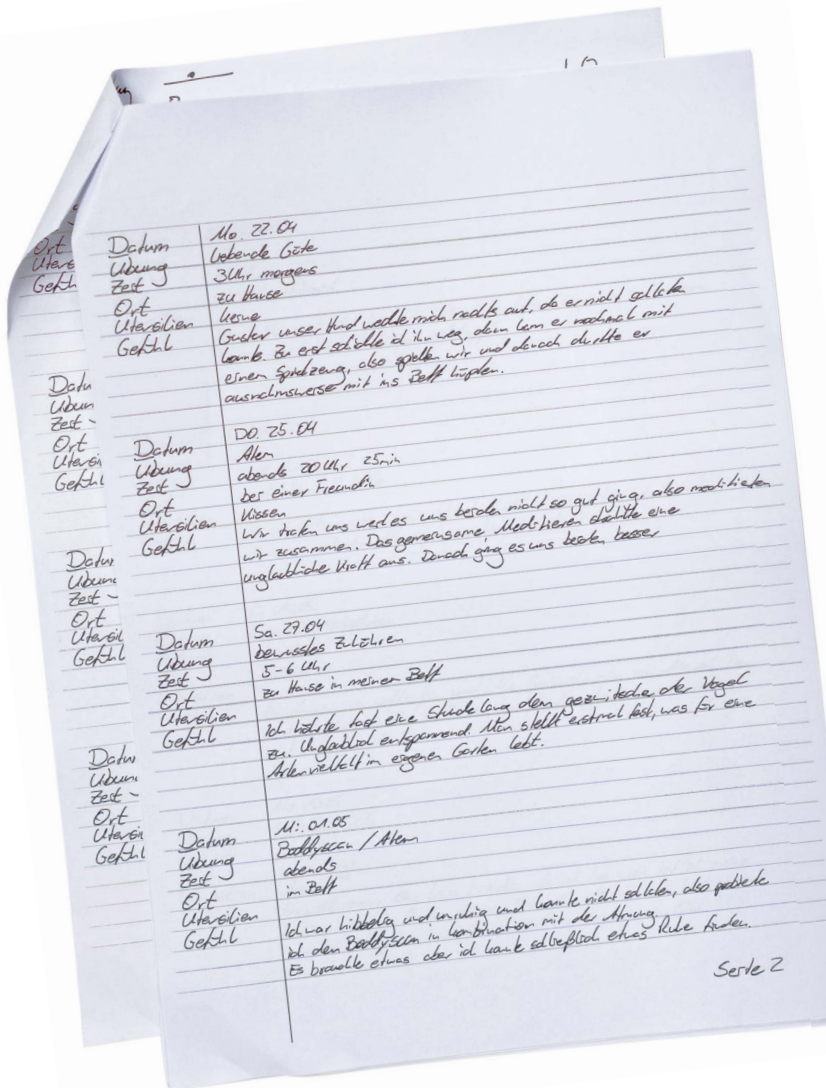
Sound meditation can be done anywhere, and is not limited by time. Every place has its own world of sound – whether one is in a forest, at the train station, in a café, at the shopping center, or by the sea. If one practices attentive listening more often, one automatically becomes more sensitive to various sounds. The same goes for silence and noise. One learns to hear more selectively, and this capacity can be useful in various situations. A good example of this is the ability to hear your own voice better. It can tell you a lot about how you feel. The same applies to consciously listening to others' voices. Acoustic features of the voice say something about the personality of a person, such as emotional stability, introversion and extroversion.

Mindful listening is best practiced with curiosity and with a certain spirit of discovery. A film worth seeing about silence and sound is *In Pursuit of Silence* by Patrick Shen. In a meditative way, the documentary explores our relationship to silence, sound and the influence of noise on our lives.

## Primary literature used for the lessons

Shen, Patrick (2018). *In Pursuit of Silence*. Köln: mindjazz pictures. [DVD]

# Journal Notes Sound Meditation



## F. S.

4/17/19, sound meditation and breath meditation

Duration: approx. 10-15 min.

I have a certain place that I only visit by myself. It's situated on a small hill with many trees and bushes. I like to sit down on the ground and lean against a tree. There I feel as if I am a part of nature.

I start to concentrate on my breathing and on what I can perceive and hear around me. Everything happens right in front of my eyes. Bees fly around, melancholic bumblebees fly slowly from leaf to leaf. Leaves rustle beside me and above me. Rays of sunlight make their way through the leaves to the earth. The wind blows sometimes stronger, sometimes weaker, sometimes it comes from the right, then from the left.

I often try to hear things that are not directly in the foreground. For example, I heard pedestrians or cyclists from further away from the small path leading along the stream. My head is free, and no thoughts disturb me. This place gives me strength.

## J. W.

6/21/19

sound meditation

Where: on my balcony

Duration: 15 min

Before the meditation I was a bit unfocused. That's why I concentrated all the more on all the sounds that can be heard from my balcony: the birds, cars, people talking, the wind, airplanes, barking dogs, the opening and closing of a garbage can, etc. An awful lot of noises and even more ... Afterwards I was suddenly much more involved and even hours after the meditation I heard much more intensely than usual. Even on my keyboard I could hear every tap (the sound), and it gave me the feeling of being consciously present. Every sound happens NOW, in the present, allows me to be completely aware.

## Name / initials not mentioned

Date: Sat. 4/27

Exercise: conscious listening

Time: 5:00–6:00 a.m.

Place: at home in my bed

Tools:

Feeling: I listened to the chirping of the birds for almost an hour. Incredibly relaxing. It helps you to realize what biodiversity lives in your own garden.



M. N.

5/3/19

**Duration: approx. 5 min.**

This morning I was meditating when the child my girlfriend takes care of was here. This child was crying and screaming all the time. So, I thought I'd try to block out this noise through my meditation. Unfortunately, this only helped to a limited extent – the screaming was too penetrating and so I stopped.

N. S.

5/4/19

**5-minute sound meditation**

I have tried to hear, identify and classify sounds inside and outside the house.

03.05.2019  
Heute morgen hatte ich meditiert, als das Tager-Kind meiner Freundin hier war. Dieses hat die ganze Zeit geweint und geschrien.  
Also dachte ich mir, ich versuche diese Geräuschunfälle durch meine Meditation auszublocken. Leider hat dies nur bedingt geholfen - das Geschrei war zu penetrant und so habe ich abgebrochen.

Dauer ca. 5min.



Atem  
Meine heutige ~~Achtsamkeit~~-  
meditation hat mich voll und  
ganz ins Hier und Jetzt geholt.  
Ich habe sehr stark meine  
Nasenflügel beim Ein- und Aus-  
atmen wahrgenommen und war  
kaum von Gedanken abgelenkt.

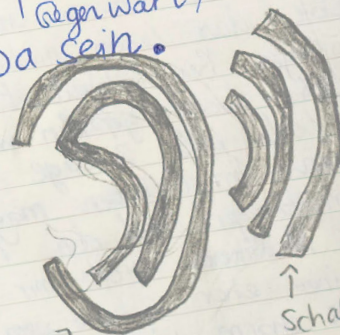


21.06.19

- Hör-Meditation
- Auf meinem Balkon
- 15 Minuten

Vor der Meditation war ich  
etwas unkonzentriert. Deshalb  
konzentrierte ich mich umso mehr  
auf die ganzen Geräusche, die  
von meinem Balkon aus zu  
hören sind: die Vogel, Autos,  
sprechende Menschen, der Wind,  
Flugzeuge, bellende Hunde, das

Auf- und Zuzumachen der Mülltonne usw.  
Wahnsinnig viele Geräusche und noch  
mehr... Danach war ich plötzlich  
viel mehr bei der Sache und  
ich hörte auch noch Stunden nach  
der Meditation viel intensiver als  
sonst. Sogar auf meiner Tastatur nahm  
ich jedes Tippen (das Geräusch) wahr,  
es gab mir das Gefühl ganz  
bewusst Da zu sein. Jedes  
Geräusch passiert gerade JETZT;  
in der Gegenwart; lässt mich  
ganz Da sein.



ohr

Schallwelle  
(ich kann leider nicht malen)

# CONCLUSION



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# General Conclusions<sup>1</sup>

The Munich Model “Mindfulness and Meditation in a University Context” has grown continuously since its inception in the 2010 summer semester. Each semester, a total of 150 students take part in its courses. The high number of applicants shows that there is even more interest than can currently be accommodated. For the “Stress Management and Meditation” course through the “General and Interdisciplinary Studies” Faculty (Munich University of Applied Sciences) more than 700 students apply each semester for the 15 available spaces! Other courses in the Munich model are likewise overbooked with often two to three times as many applicants as available spaces.

My personal observations as a lecturer thus far – and after having read about 2000 meditation journals, each 25-40 pages long – confirm that after about 4 months of participation in the courses, the students are better able to cope with everyday challenges, the general pressure to perform and the occasional high stress of their studies. The courses help the students to deal more effectively with stress situations and to handle them in a more neutral and objective manner.

Minor disagreements that can lead to greater disputes and conflicts, for example those arising from road traffic or family quarrels, can now be approached more constructively. Through mindfulness and meditation exercises, the students learn not to impulsively react, but to briefly pause, using this pause to approach the situation differently, and more deliberately. In this way, one is able to “side step” the emotions.

Some students also report a diminished urge to consume – for example, they feel less inclined to shop, and quite a few are better able to fall asleep at night. I have also noticed that they are generally more relaxed in class and that they display an increase in mutual trust. This also proves important because their experiences are shared within the group.

Testimonies and feedback discussions in class also indicate that the “Loving Kindness” exercises and the compassion meditations lead to a better understanding of others and to more emotional serenity. The students find it easier to take on a meta-level, which is also helpful for dealing with scientific questions.

To implement a program such as the Munich Model at other universities, a fair amount of persuasion may at first be required, as the value of mindfulness and meditation in such a context is not evident to some decision makers. Profound knowledge of the results of general research, and also that which specifically relates to a university context, can provide convincing support in presenting such a project (see “Research”, p. 41 ff.).

An important criterion is didactic mediation. Because mindfulness and especially meditation have such a significant effect on mental hygiene, teachers carry a great responsibility. One needs a long and well-founded experience of meditation to be able to teach meditation techniques, especially those related to a deep inner immersion. A familiarity with different meditation approaches is also important so that students are presented with a variety of options. Conversely, general mindfulness practices are easier to teach, for example as part of the curriculum, or as auxiliary classes or built into courses such as math or computer science. This is particularly evident in the case of lecturers who have themselves begun to introduce brief mindfulness and meditation exercises in class (see p. 18 ff., 32 f., 87 sowie 122 f.). Our partnership with the Center of Teaching and Learning (DiZ) in Bavaria is providing further expertise in this area, as is the exchange

with our cooperative partners in Jena and Osnabrück, who already run training programs developed by the Thüringer Model for university teachers.

After completing their studies, some students have themselves become lecturers for the Munich Model. Regular meetings are coordinated with these students so that they're supported in terms of teaching content, didactic mediation and performance record assessment. Although they're expected to adhere to the guidelines when teaching the course content, they're also expected to find their own teaching methods, as authenticity is an essential prerequisite for teaching (see "About Teaching", p. 81).

Additionally, an appropriate infrastructure has to be set up to implement mindfulness and meditation programs at universities. The standard classroom with tables and chairs is not entirely suitable. A quiet room in which students can practice undisturbed is important for practical exercises. This can be equipped with cushions, blankets and mats. In addition, it's useful that there be storage cabinets for these materials, as well as a lending library with expert literature and films. Moreover, certain areas of the university could be designated as "mindfulness and meditation" areas: for example, an area could be reserved in the cafeteria for those who would like to eat in silence.

Another question is whether the mindfulness and meditation courses are offered on a voluntary basis in addition to the curriculum or should be firmly anchored in the curricula as for-credit courses. In the latter case, the courses must be designed accordingly: with learning objectives, assessment criteria, possible grades and ECTS. The Munich model demonstrates the feasibility of this option.

In order to ensure the high-quality, sustainable implementation of a mindfulness and meditation program it's also important that someone take responsibility to supervise and coordinate all the various aspects of it.. This could be a teacher who incorporates these topics into their own field of study, for example. Or an anchoring in the area of "Health Promoting University". Or, as in the case of Osnabrück University, an office can be established to implement and coordinate the program.

In the context of degree programs, there is also the question of specialization and certification. In the near future it's planned that students who take part in all the mindfulness and meditation courses offered through the Social Work degree program will receive an additional certificate with their Bachelor's degree. This demonstrates that they've examined the topic in depth, achieving a supplemental qualification in this area. Such a specification could also be offered for other degree programs, for example Pedagogy.

In the final reflections of the meditation journals the possibilities of practical application to students' later professional fields are explored. Through this it becomes evident that the implementation of mindfulness and meditation approaches in the various professional fields has enormous potential. This could be realized through university certificate training programs for professionals, for example those working early childhood education, or in youth work or the care sector.

Should the field of "Mindfulness and Meditation" become more widespread in society, it's also conceivable that professional specialization takes the form of a master's degree. This has already been achieved at the KPH Vienna in the form of a master's degree program called "Mindfulness in Education, Counselling and Health Care".

Training opportunities for teaching staff have already been noted. For example, it's possible to offer short workshops and seminars as well as extensive certificate training. The universities in Jena and Osnabrück have already implemented this idea (see p. 65 f.).

Meanwhile, more than 2000 students have taken part in the courses of the Munich Model. It's become apparent that many participants wish to continue meditating after

the courses end, but find it difficult or impossible to do so without a dedicated group. Some of these students continue independently, attending meditation schools in order to further their education in meditation techniques. But so far this number is relatively small. The current participants would like to see a new follow-up course on “Mindfulness and Meditation” offered every semester, as well as additional voluntary meditation courses offered at the university. Research conducted by Coburg University (see p. 65) indicates that Munich Model participants find these meditation programs meaningful and would like to see further programs of this kind.

Many of the current and former participants exhibit a great desire for exchange with their classmates. This is especially the case among students who are carrying out mindfulness and meditation projects on their own, as part of their final theses, or who implement these projects in their professional field after completing their studies, such as through their work in kindergartens and schools. Against this background, it seems desirable to create a place within the university where students can continue meditating together and exchange ideas. In Munich, this would be a center for mindfulness and meditation that would belong to the city’s universities. I am convinced that such a place would be an enormous benefit for the students. As mindfulness and meditation are meeting with more and more interest and acceptance in society, such a center would also serve as a great asset for the universities.

## SOURCES

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### Magazine

de Bruin, Andreas (2017). “Möglichkeiten der Geistesschulung: Meditation im universitären Kontext? – Das Münchener-Modell”, in: *Zeitschrift für Bewusstseinswissenschaften. Transpersonale Psychologie und Psychotherapie*, 23. Jahrgang 2. Petersberg: Verlag Via Nova, p. 68-84.

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<sup>1</sup> Sections of the text are in part taken from: de Bruin 2017 as well as de Bruin 2019a.

# Meditations- tagebuch



1.4.19  
Ich habe bereits letztes Sommersemester Ihre Lehrveranstaltung Meditation besucht. Auch nach dem Semester habe ich noch einige Monate täglich meditiert, es aber dann nach und nach leider vernachlässigt. Aus diesem Grund bin ich sehr froh darüber erneut an einer Meditationsvorlesung teilzunehmen, da ich in der Zeit während ich regelmäßig meditiert habe deutlich entspannter und gelassener war als zum jetzigen Zeitpunkt!

Meditation! Was erhoffe ich & Achtsamkeit  
 & Achtsamkeit  
 Was erhoffe ich  
 wir von diesem  
 Kurs?

- \* möglicherweise  
weiterlernen Stress im  
Alltag zu gewinnen
- \* Migräne (kurzeit 20 Tage im  
Monat) besser in den Griff zu  
bekommen
- \* Ruhe, Stille
- \* Zeit für mich
- \* Bewusstes wahrnehmen  
(Körper, Umwelt, Mitmenschen  
→ Was tut mir gut?)
- \* Abschalten → Gedanken mal  
kurz „ausschalten“
- \* Meditations- und Achtsamkeits-  
übungen/-formen weiterlernen  
die mich im präventiven  
Alltag unterstützen  
+ die ich möglicherweise  
mit Klientengruppen anwenden kann



# Journal Notes on Expectations

## B. K.

I have been meditating for many years. Unfortunately, I have not yet managed to make meditation part of my daily life; there have always been phases in which I meditate a lot and then not at all.

After periods when I have not been meditating, it's difficult to start again, because I am often overwhelmed by a flood of thoughts.

This is why I wish for myself: to be able to integrate meditation firmly into my life and no longer have phases in which I don't find the motivation to meditate!

The university course "Meditation" by Andreas de Bruin will certainly help me to achieve this.

## C. B.

Meditation & Mindfulness! What do I hope for from this course?

- to learn about possibilities for minimizing stress in everyday life
- to get my migraine headaches (currently 20 days a month) better "under control"
- calm, silence
- time for me
- conscious perception (body, environment, fellow human beings – what is good for me?)
- to "switch off" thoughts for a moment
- meditation and mindfulness exercises and [to learn about] forms which [can] support me in my daily pedagogical work and which I may be able to apply with client groups

## J. W.

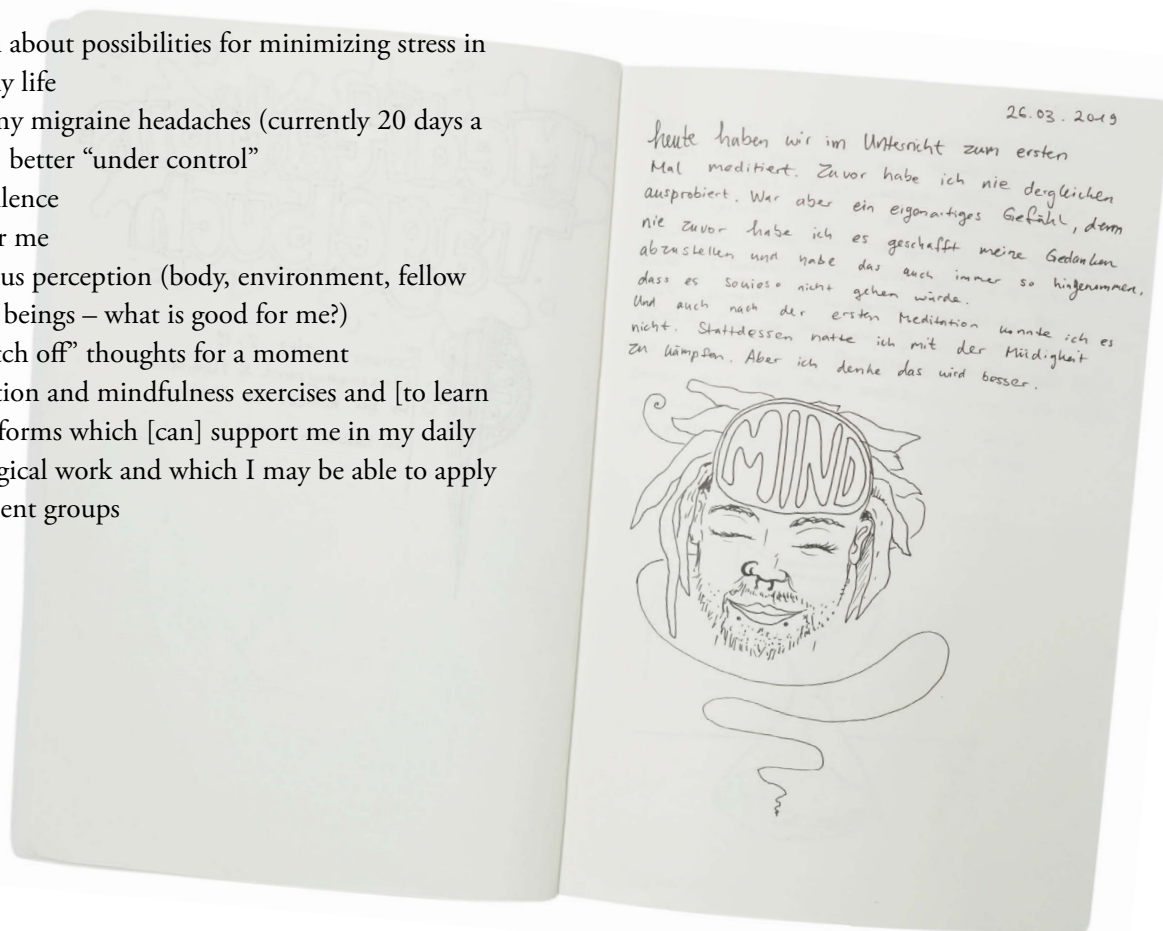
4/1/19

I already attended your course "Meditation" last summer semester, and after the semester I continued to meditate daily for a few months, but then gradually neglected it. For this reason I am very happy to attend another meditation course, because during the time I meditated regularly I was much more relaxed and calm than I am now!

## M. N.

Today we meditated in class for the first time. Before that I never tried anything like this. But it was a strange feeling, because I never before managed to turn off my thoughts and I always accepted that it wouldn't work anyway.

Even after the first meditation I couldn't do it. Instead, I had to struggle with fatigue. But I think this will get better.



Ich meditiere schon seit vielen Jahren  
 Leider habe ich es bisher nicht geschafft, meditieren zum Alltag zu machen, es gab immer wieder Phasen in denen ich viel zum meditieren gekommen bin und dann wieder gar nicht.

Nach einer Zeit wo ich nicht meditiert habe fällt es schwer wieder anzufangen, da ich oft von Gedankenfluten überrollt werde.

daran zu denken Zuhause auf der Couch zu liegen mit "achtsamen" Netflix versteht sich

Uns ist gar nicht bewusst wie viel Energie wir eigentlich durch das ständige Denken, bewerten, schnelles kommentieren oder "wo wäre ich im Moment am liebsten" - Gedankenchaos unnötigerweise verbrauchen. Energie, die wir eigentlich dafür benötigen, um das wesentliche am ganzen Geschehen zu erfassen. Nicht nur bezogen auf den Inhalt der Erzählung, sondern die Tiefenrigkeit des Ganzen zu verstehen. Die Tiefe besteht meines Erachtens darin, das schöne am Zusammenspiel, die Möglichkeit in Interaktion zu treten, sich auszutauschen, die Freude oder auch Trauer, die empfundene Spannung sowie das Bedürfnis des Gegenübers, die

eigenen Eindrücke nur dir mitteilen zu wollen, aufzunehmen.  
 Wieso immer distanzieren, wieso diese voreiligen Bewertungen und Vorurteile?  
 Sei still und höre einfach nur zu! Ist doch ganz leicht



Diese Übung empfinde ich auch für die Dozentenvorträge als sehr hilfreich. In den Vorlesungen wird es mir helfen, mich immer wieder auf den Dozenten zu konzentrieren, aufkommende Gedanken beiseite zu schieben und immer wieder in Erinnerung zu rufen, was hat der/die Dozent/in gerade eben beschrieben?  
 Nicht nur im Studium, sondern auch im Freundeskreis werde ich phasenweise achtsamer kommunizieren, um die Fähigkeit anzuwecken, gezielt auf der Sachebene bleiben zu können.

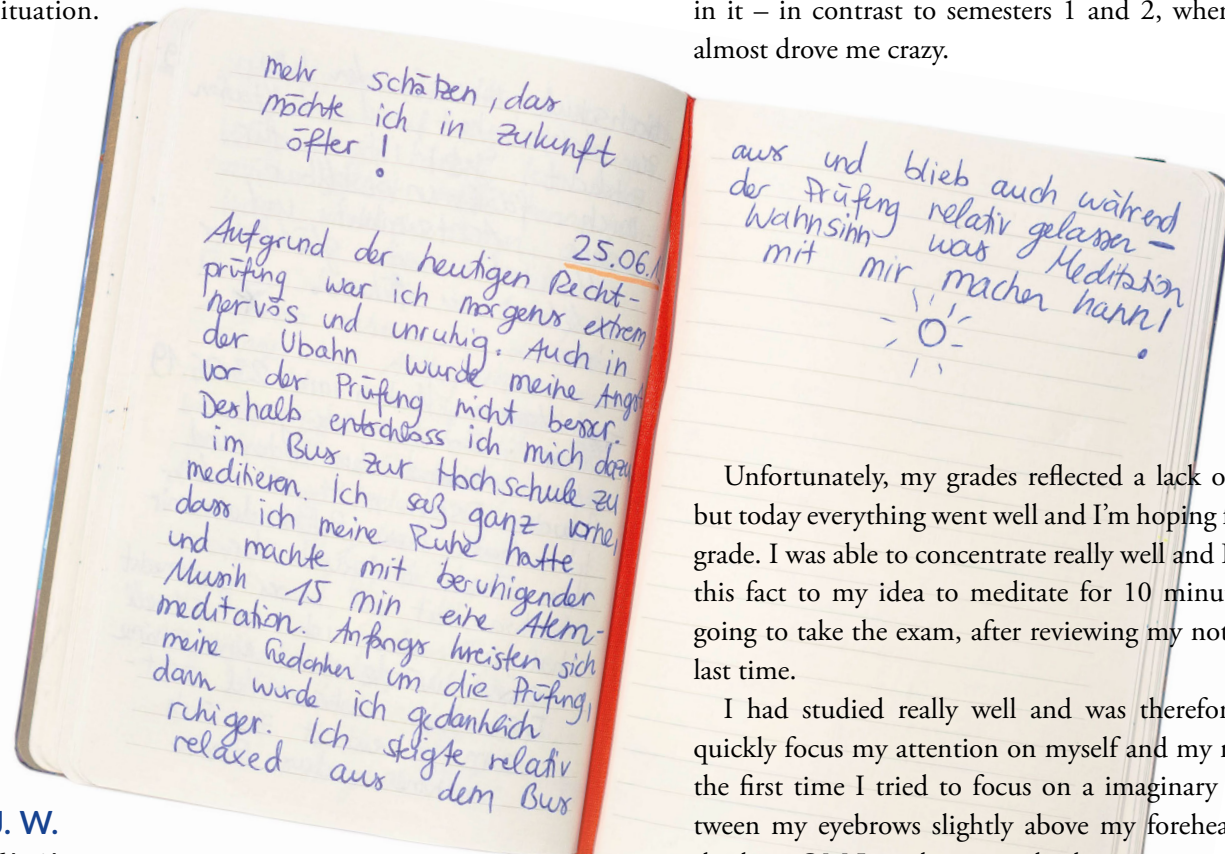


# Journal Notes on Learning/Exams

J. S.

Thursday, 6/6/19, ca. 3:20–3:25 p.m.

Today I was at the university studying. After a very long study session on electrical engineering, I was completely worn out. Then I closed my eyes for a moment and just concentrated on my breath to clear my head. At some point I noticed that my head no longer felt so “heavy”. I then opened my eyes again, had a sip of my drink, and then studied another subject. It helped me a lot in this situation.



J. W.

6/25/19

Today, I was extremely nervous and restless in the morning, due to my law exam. While riding the subway, my fear of this exam didn't subside. So I decided to meditate on the bus on my way to the university. I sat in the front seat so that I could have my peace and quiet and did a 15-minute breathing meditation with calming music. At first my thoughts circled around the exam, then I became mentally calmer. I got off the bus feeling relatively relaxed and also remained relatively calm during the exam – it's amazing what meditation does for me!

K. K.

Where: in my room

How: cross-legged on my carpet, leaning against the wall unit

When: Monday, 5/12/14, 12:00 p.m.

Duration: 10 min

Today I took my first exam this semester, in my major subject: Biology. The topic covered human and animal physiology and I personally (finally!) took great interest in it – in contrast to semesters 1 and 2, where ecology almost drove me crazy.

Unfortunately, my grades reflected a lack of interest, but today everything went well and I'm hoping for a good grade. I was able to concentrate really well and I attribute this fact to my idea to meditate for 10 minutes before going to take the exam, after reviewing my notes for the last time.

I had studied really well and was therefore able to quickly focus my attention on myself and my mind. For the first time I tried to focus on a imaginary point between my eyebrows slightly above my forehead and by thinking OM I tried to come back to it again and again, rather than concentrating on breathing through my nose.

It really worked amazingly well, and I only noticed the 10 minutes were already up when the tone from my alarm sounded. I didn't find focusing on a different part of the face or the length of time exhausting, and afterwards I felt strengthened to take the exam.

**L. R.****7/20/17, 6:00 p.m., approx. 20 min****Mindful piano playing**

I have now taught myself three songs on the piano. I love these melodies and love to play them by heart. Today, I did an experiment, and I closed my eyes while relying entirely on my fingers, which have played these [melodies] so often. With full attention, I directed my senses to the melodies in my head, and relaxed and at ease I tried to play these melodies on the piano. This helped me to perceive the music even more intensely. I was very happy.

**7/22/17, 12:00 p.m., about 10 min****Breathing exercise**

On Saturday I had two exams. After the first exam I went for a walk for half an hour (mindful walking meditation). Afterwards I sat down on a park bench in Luitpoldpark, closed my eyes and meditated. There I felt again the circling on my palms, which were open upwards.

I drew in the fresh air through my nostrils. I consciously watched my breath. Thus I was able to regain my strength and to think clearly. Calm and strengthened I went into the second exam.

**S. B.**

We are completely unaware of how much energy we're actually using, unnecessarily, through constant thinking, evaluating, making snap judgments or the "where would I like to be at the moment" chaos of thoughts. Energy that we actually need in order to grasp the essence of the entire situation, not just to understand the content of the story, but to understand the depth of it all. In my opinion, the depth consists in the beauty of being together, the possibility of interaction, exchange, the joy or sadness, the tension and the desire of the other person just to share their own impressions with you.

Why always imitate? Why these hasty remarks and prejudices?

Be quiet and just listen! It's very easy.

I also find this exercise very helpful during presentations by the lecturers. During lectures it helps me to, time and again, concentrate on the instructor, to push aside any thoughts that come up and to remind myself repeatedly, of what the instructor has just said.

Not only in my studies, but also in my circle of friends, I'll communicate more attentively at times, in order to develop the ability to stay focused on the subject matter.

**S. Z.****What: ajna meditation****Time: 10 min**

After having made so many careless mistakes and simply not being able to concentrate during a study session about 5 hours long, I tried to improve the situation with an ajna meditation. At first I thought it strange to meditate in the middle of the library with my eyes closed, so I fixed my gaze on a point just in front of me. As the library was peaceful and quiet, it was very easy for me to do the exercise.

I started the meditation without setting a time limit, because I wanted to see how long it would take before I'd notice a difference. Although it felt like I had only meditated for maybe 4 or 5 minutes, in the end it was almost 10 minutes.

In retrospect, I felt [refreshed], as if I had taken a nap because I was able to concentrate much more than before.

# Journal Notes on Reflections

## A. B.

When I took the “Meditation at School” course at LSF, I didn’t know what to expect from it. I personally hadn’t had much experience with meditation, but the description totally appealed to me. I was eager to get to know new forms of meditation and also to learn about their applicability to children in primary school. Although I had no idea about meditation at that time, I resolved to fully engage in something new.

The first exercise we did together at the seminar was the mindful eating of a raisin. I was fascinated by the effect of the story on my sense of taste. I was able to perceive this raisin very intensely with all my senses and finally ate it with a pleasure like never before. I also found the effect of the lemon story on the body totally exciting.

The first meditation we did together was still a bit hard for me. We were supposed to concentrate on our nostrils and pay attention to our breathing. For this first time, I didn’t manage to let my thoughts pass by like clouds, and to be honest, I thought to myself afterwards: “Next time, I’ll close my eyes and pretend to meditate, because nobody will notice anyway!”

In our second seminar session we meditated with our focus on the ajna center between the eyebrows. Even this form of meditation didn’t work for me at first and I had thoughts like “I’m not cut out for meditation” or “I just can’t do it”.

It was only when we practiced with the Mantra MA-RA-NA-THA that I was really able to engage with meditation and I noticed that from time to time it became easier for me to concentrate only on myself and my body. From then on I was totally looking forward to the seminar and was eager to try the exercises at home. I also tried the other two meditation forms a couple of times and they worked better than the first two times, but the mantra remained my favourite exercise to do at home. It was the exercise I chose most often. Through the inner recitation of the syllables MA-RA-NA-THA other thoughts had hardly any chance to enter my consciousness. I think that is also one of the reasons why I enjoyed this exercise so much, simply because it was the first “right” form of meditation that worked well for me straight away.

The mantra was also often used when I felt like I was passing out while learning because I needed a break. It calmed me down extremely well and grounded me again. Afterwards I often felt much more effective and full of energy.

During the Bodyscan I felt totally relaxed and concentrated at the same time. I had never before thought about the individual parts of my body so intensely and I found the experience totally exciting. Unfortunately, I often felt that the body scan takes too much time and that I should choose another form of meditation. However, even today I still use the body scan to switch off and come down when I am lying in bed and my head is so full of thoughts that I can’t relax and have problems falling asleep.

The exercise helps me a lot to get away from the world for a short time and to really concentrate only on myself and my own body. I am really very grateful to be familiar with this exercise and have already passed it on to friends, who now use it as a sleeping aid from time to time. :)

Meditating has really benefited me a lot. I will definitely continue and search for more meditation courses. Keeping the meditation journal has helped me to stay on top of things and to really do my exercises regularly. I think the idea of such a journal as proof of performance is great. Everyone can put their own individual thoughts into words and is still compelled to keep on going, even if they experience some kind of slump.

Out of my expectant, but also slightly critical attitude from the beginning, an incredible interest in meditation has grown in me. I know that what we were taught in the classroom is really something that one can use effectively for oneself, but also in school with one’s students.

## A. U.

### **What has changed for me through meditation:**

In the beginning the single meditation exercises were like single elements that I practiced at a certain time.

But meanwhile this has changed. Meditation and to the other exercises are now something that I always “carry with me”, something that can help me (if necessary, very quickly) in everyday life, such as conscious breathing, walking meditation, mantras etc.



If I feel strange or I only have a few minutes, I sit down for a moment and close my eyes and try to be more conscious and attentive. Often even a brief moment of this helps me to feel better.

All in all, I have noticed that through meditation, I have become calmer and more relaxed in everyday life. I increasingly have the feeling that I can get off this “hamster wheel” and get a kind of “meta-view”, particularly in situations that used to stress me out and throw me off track. The longer meditations that I usually do in the evening (before going to bed) help me especially. This is when I try to understand my feelings and behaviors by looking for their cause. Particularly in the last few days I have had the feeling that due to meditation, a door has opened which has brought me a little bit further in this respect.

Above all, through the trust and better contact with myself, which I am building more and more through meditation, I have the feeling that I can go deeper into my themes and gain clarity. This is a nice feeling, because I have found a way to handle (better) difficult situations and to feel less helpless and alone. I find the body scan in particular a totally beautiful and effective form of meditation.

On the other hand I have the feeling that meditation can also make you aware of things. For example, I find mindful eating incredibly difficult. Many times I have tried to do this exercise, but it always pushes me to my limits.

In the beginning I was very annoyed and I almost cursed this exercise until I took a closer look at it and tried to examine “behind the scenes”. By becoming aware of my otherwise not so great eating habits, I went in search of the root causes and discovered amazing things. This has opened up a lot of new possibilities and areas which I can now deal with and which may bring me a big step forward. I am far from having finished this task. But I am working on it and I am on my way!

All in all I can say that I am incredibly happy to have gotten to know meditation. It is like a gift, and the changes I have experienced are amazing.

Meditation has become an integral part of my life that I don't want to miss anymore!

## B. K.

### It's over ... and on we go

Tomorrow I'll be turning in this journal. Hard to believe the semester's already over.

Thank you very much for this great course; it was very nice and I am looking forward to the advanced meditation courses.

I already know that, in the future, I want to work in the same field as you do. You have shown me that the working world is becoming more receptive and that it's possible to gain a foothold in the field of coping with stress, meditation etc. This is great for me, as I now have a goal for my professional life. Thanks so much for that!

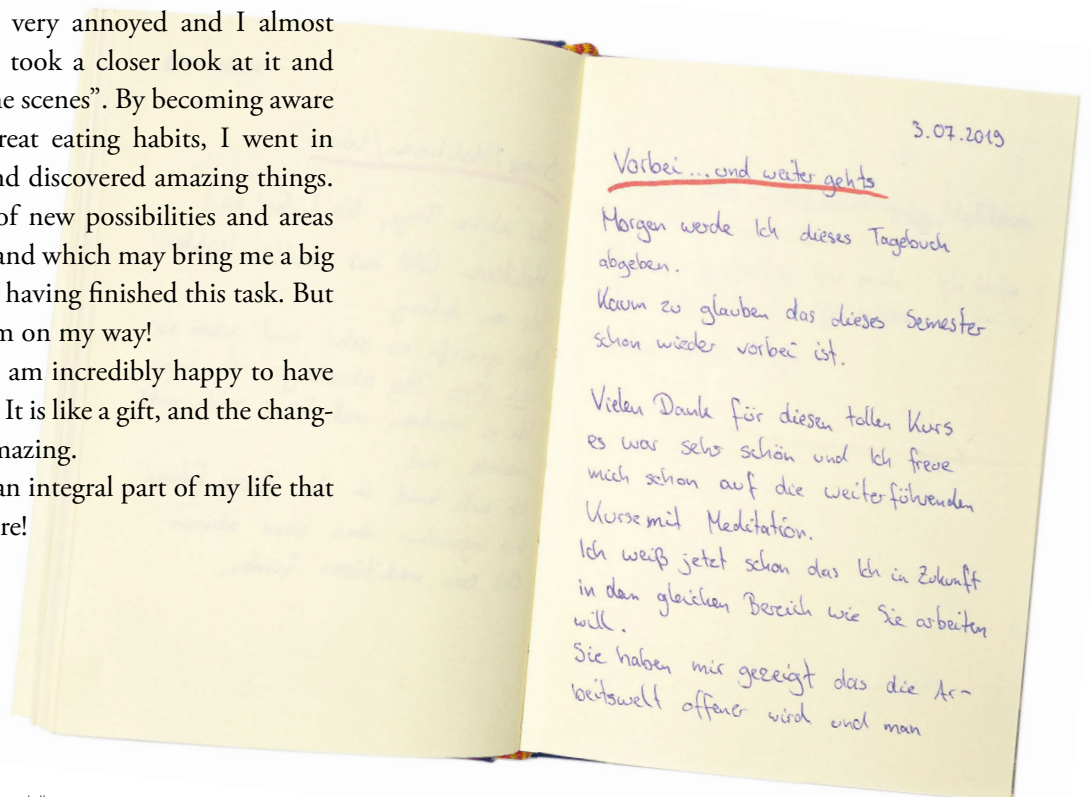
## C. W.

I would say a lot has changed in the time from the start of the course up to now. Already the exercise of loving kindness alone, which I automatically incorporate into my daily life every day in all kinds of situations, continually opens up new perspectives for me and allows me to live in a much more relaxed and peaceful way.

Every week I have looked forward to the meditation courses, to new exercises, to new stories that inspire me to think further.

I am very grateful that many students have the opportunity to be introduced to meditation in the context of a lecture!

All I can say is that these seminars were/are very enriching for me. In the meantime, I see meditation in a com-



pletely different way than I did at the beginning, where I was often thinking about time or saw meditation as something where I have to achieve something, where things are good or bad, right or wrong. None of this matters!

During the meditations I'm able to spend time with myself, to withdraw from society – so to speak, and find my inner self.

My view of the world alone has already changed. I don't know if this is due to meditation, but before this I had so many thoughts about suffering, wars and injustice and I doubted so much and couldn't comprehend that if there is a God, why there are so many innocent people who are starving, dying etc.? I can't answer this, but the doubts, anger, incomprehension are simply no longer there. It is difficult for me to explain, but I trust life all of a sudden. I can see everything in a much more relaxed way, I am not afraid of the future, but do the best I can for myself and my fellow men.

In many ways meditation gives me strength, faith, a means of deep relaxation and joy!

I thank you for your time and everything that you're sharing with the world!

## E. M.

I had heard a lot about meditation and its effects before the seminar. But I wasn't able to imagine much about it, especially not how it could be implemented in the context of a school setting. At first I wasn't quite sure I was doing it right either. When thoughts kept coming into my consciousness, I really thought that I was doing it wrong. But as I continued, I noticed that something was different.

I noticed this specifically when I went to the doctor for treatment. The doctor wanted to give me an injection. But I have a phobia of injections and needles, which often causes me to cry. Despite a bit of anxiety, the thought of using "Maranatha" occurred to me, so I tried to concentrate on my breathing and on "Maranatha." I noticed that my body was restless and that my heart was beating faster. Yet my body's response was much more relaxed than usual. Although, in retrospect, I would rate this treatment as one of the most painful, I was amazed by my steadfastness.

Moreover, I have noticed that my reaction in relation to the behaviour of others has become more considerate and inquisitive. When I encounter negative behaviour I'm not immediately annoyed – it's reduced, or rather I try to not become upset. I think about why someone is

## Reflexion

In der Zeit - zu Beginn des Kurses, bis jetzt - würde ich sagen, hat sich viel verändert. Alleine die liebende Güte Übung, die ich täglich automatisch in alle möglichen Situationen in meinen Alltag einbaue, öffnet mir immer wieder neue Blickwinkel und lässt mich viel entspannter und friedlicher leben.

Ich habe mich jede Woche wieder auf die Meditationskurse gefreut, auf neue Übungen, neue Geschichten, die zum Weiterdenken anregen.

Ich bin sehr dankbar, dass viele Studierende die Möglichkeit haben, Meditation im Rahmen einer Vorlesung kennenzulernen!

Ich kann nur von mir sagen, dass die Seminare sehr bereichernd für mich waren / sind. Mittlerweile sehe ich Meditation ganz anders als zu Beginn, wo ich die Zeit oft im Kopf hatte oder meditieren als etwas gesehen habe, wo ich etwas erreichen muss, wo es gut oder schlecht / richtig oder falsch gibt. Dabei spielt das alles

acting in this way and what the reasons might be. It helps me to regulate my quick-tempered emotions.

I also noticed that I felt less stress before exams. I had less insomnia, less fear or panicky thoughts. You could even say that I went into the exam relaxed. The meditation helped me during the learning process to concentrate. In fact I meditated more during the learning phase than the rest of the time. It was my tool to overcome any learning blocks. Even time constraints and a heavy study load didn't upset me.

I often notice that when my thoughts center around meditation, I feel a tingling sensation on my forehead. This also happens when I use the Maranatha meditation. During meditation, the tingling on my forehead is my control mechanism, and shows me whether I am still meditating with concentration or my focus is already slipping. The more intensively I feel the point on my forehead, the more fixed I am in meditation.

I will try to meditate a lot despite the absence of learning stress. Meditation has helped me a great deal to regulate my emotions. But, I'd still like to even better control my affective behaviour and thus be more conscious in emotional situations.

## F. S.

Meditation continues to help me to feel calmer and more balanced. I have been able to learn a lot about myself. I need rest more often. I ought to allow myself to rest more often, physically and mentally. I have found that I am stressed a lot by my environment and the people around me and that this causes an imbalance in me. I find everything stressful. Few people are able to find peace and quiet. I see this every day when I take the S-Bahn [commuter train], for example. Everybody is looking at their mobile phones, nobody's there. I often try to block it all out or close my eyes to find my inner peace. But everything around me is rushed and stressed. There are always new appointments or times that one "has to" keep. Often I cause myself stress, through all sorts of expectations I put on myself or through expectations of others on me. I try to live up to all this, but often I do not listen to myself. [...]

My thoughts about myself have changed. It's OK to make mistakes and to have faults – that's what distinguishes a person. Only machines run perfectly. I know that I can draw strength from nature itself. That is why I now go more often to nature or to places that are quiet and harmonious. So that I myself can bring harmony back into my inner being. I have now found a direction and a way. I know what's good for me and what's not. Thanks to meditation I am finding the way to myself more and more. I absolutely intend to continue this.

## H. K.

### Reflection of the past semester

This seminar was very important for me. It provided very interesting content and I was able to gather many ideas for my future profession as a teacher. This course was particularly valuable for me, as I am also engaged in this topic in my private life, but here I was able to learn about different points of view and new methods, which I found very well facilitated.

I especially enjoyed observing how I was progressively able to get a better feel for the methods, especially for "conscious breathing", how my body and mind became better and better attuned to it, and how I was able to develop a different, better feeling for my body over time.

If I look back at my journal again, I can see that in the beginning I still had difficulty concentrating and finding the right state and maintaining it. Also letting go of my thoughts caused me some difficulty in the beginning. But over the course of the semester I was able to better em-

pathize, discovered the right sitting position for myself and was able to fully concentrate on the meditations. Of course there were also situations throughout the semester where I had to pull myself together to do the exercises. But when I did them anyway, I felt very good afterwards.

I found it especially remarkable how my body was able to adjust to the meditations better and more quickly and how I relaxed more and more.

My everyday life has also become somewhat lighter since then, and I am able to enjoy each day in a much more calm and serene way. I also noticed that I approached certain problems in a much more relaxed way and was able to solve them more easily.

Through this experience I firmly resolved to try to incorporate meditation into my everyday life. I especially liked the "mindful breathing", the "body scan" and the "walking meditation". Another very valuable observation for me was that I found it better to do the exercises in the morning than in the evening, so that I was able to start and manage my days in a much more relaxed way.

## J. W.

6/22/19

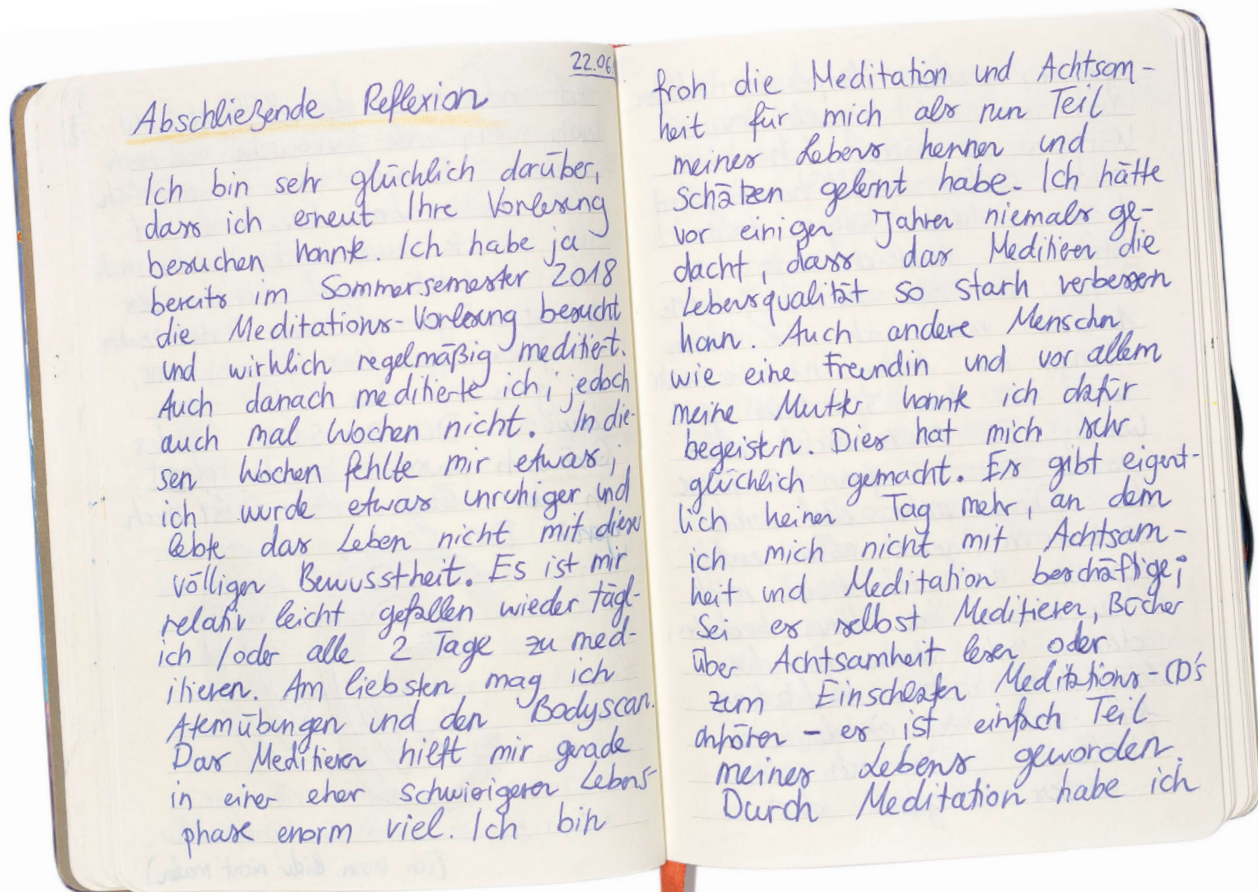
I am very happy that I was able to attend your lecture again. I had already attended the meditation lecture in the summer semester 2018 and actually meditated regularly.

I also continued to meditate afterwards, but sometimes I didn't practice for weeks. During these weeks I felt something missing, I became a bit restless and did not live my life with such full awareness. It was relatively easy for me to meditate again daily or every 2 days. I like the breathing exercises and the body scan best. Meditating helps me enormously, especially during a difficult period of my life. I am glad to have got to know and appreciate meditation and mindfulness as a part of my life. A few years earlier I would never have thought that meditating could improve the quality of life so much.

I was able to inspire other people, such as my girlfriend and above all my mother, to also do so. This has made me very happy. Actually not one day goes by now without my being occupied with mindfulness and meditation. Whether it's meditating myself, reading books about mindfulness or listening to meditation CDs to fall asleep – it has simply become part of my life.

Through meditation I have learned to appreciate my body and to listen more to signals coming from my body. I have come to know myself better and can really say that I am much more at peace with myself than I was 1-2 years





ago. In addition, I perceive the small things in everyday life more intensively and I have become more spontaneous. Everything need not go according to plan. I allow things to come more to me, I approach everything in a more relaxed way.

I can only thank you for giving students the opportunity to discover meditation for themselves. Perhaps without this offer from the university I would never have discovered the path to mindfulness and meditation. Now it is almost inconceivable for me to live a happy life without mindfulness and meditation.

### L. M. W.

I must say that I feel much better after your "Meditation and Stress Management" course. I have learned to handle experiences, activities and emotional states with greater awareness and consciousness. Unfortunately, I suffer from ADD and have to take medication every day in order to be able to concentrate. Since I have been in your meditation course, I have been able to greatly reduce the dosage of these pills and am mostly free of medication.

I'm super happy that I had the opportunity to come to your course and have such positive experiences.

### L. R.

I was very happy to be able to take a seminar on meditation as part of my studies. Looking back, I enjoyed this seminar very much. Every Monday I would go to the university with a sense of joy because I knew that I would again be able to meditate and experience and learn something new and interesting. Shortly before the seminar, I happened to read the autobiography of Paramahansa Yogananda, which gave me new insights into life. I am also familiar with a few yoga techniques (e.g. sun salutation). Without realizing it, I was already practicing mindfulness before this, immersing myself deeply and consciously in one activity (e.g. cooking, walking, cleaning, playing an instrument etc.). I also found the film "Monks in the Laboratory" very interesting.

The topic of meditation is becoming increasingly more popular in western countries. Even science is paying greater attention to this topic and there are many new findings that demonstrate the positive effects of meditation.

Of the meditation techniques I learned in this seminar, I particularly liked focusing on the ajna center and the walking meditation. Often I have been able to integrate these exercises into my everyday life. So it's these exercises that have most intensively engaged me this semester and

I will continue to practice them. For me, meditation is like a key to myself. Through it I find peace in my often stressful and transitory daily life. The practice has already helped me in certain situations (especially during exams). I look forward to using these techniques in schools and practicing with children.

### M. K.

Prior to the seminar, I personally had never meditated before and I had never had the feeling that I could ever manage to just sit quietly and watch my breath. Likewise, I couldn't imagine that I would be able to draw any added value from it for my state of being in everyday life.

Inwardly I was constantly evaluating my meditation and was annoyed when it didn't work out the way I imagined it should. In the course of time I wouldn't say that meditation has gotten easier, but my attitude with respect to meditation has changed. I have learned that it doesn't always work the same way and that it's not a straightforward process. I have learned to see the whole thing in a more relaxed way, because it's all about relaxing. Over time I have noticed how meditation has changed me.

I like the idea of keeping a meditation journal very much, because I was so "compelled" to meditate and afterwards I was forced to consider what actually takes place in me through meditation.

### M. N.

I started this course without any expectations. In the meantime, I have come to realize the effectiveness of meditation as an instrument for self-discovery, stress management and concentration. I will continue to meditate into the future. Thank you very much for your great introduction to this interesting topic!

### T. F.

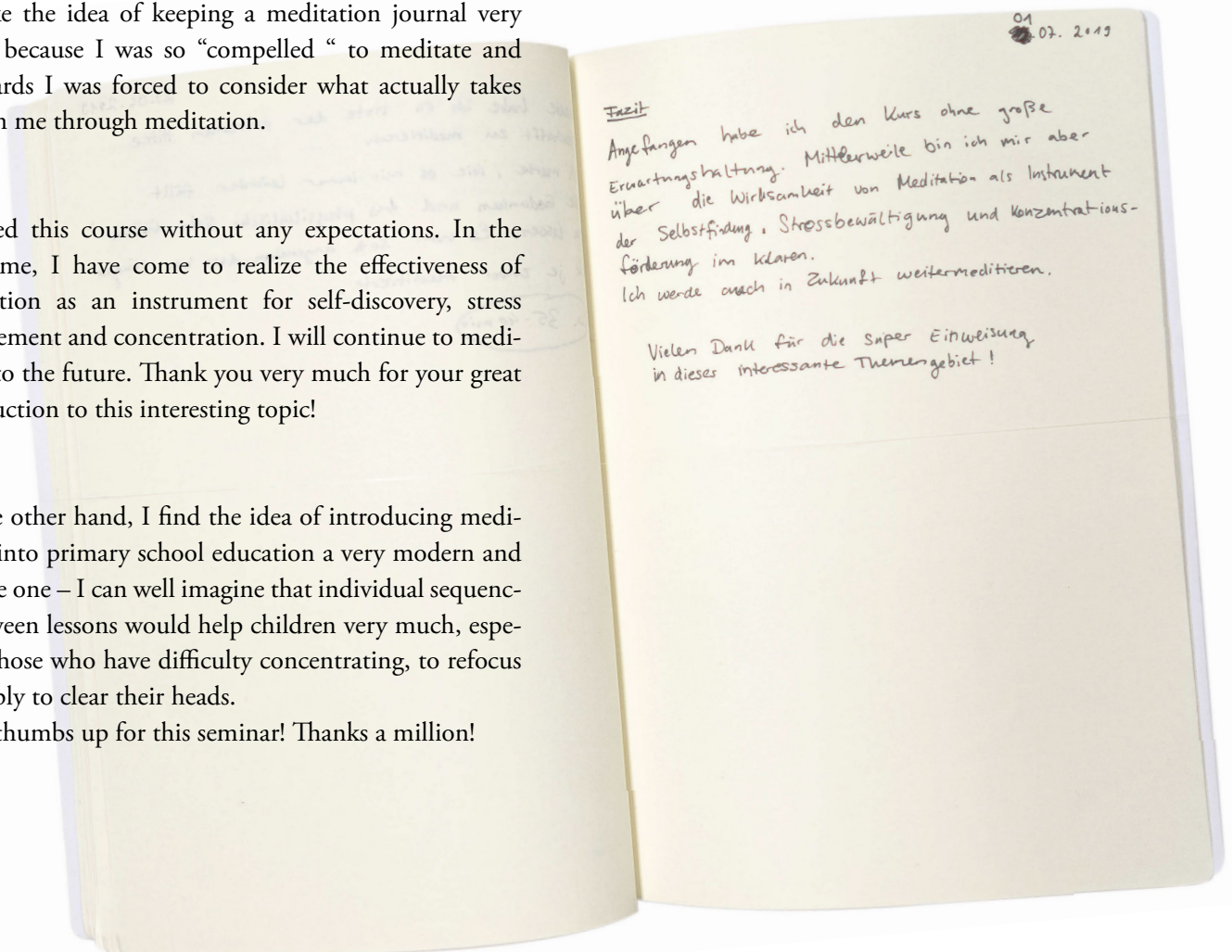
On the other hand, I find the idea of introducing meditation into primary school education a very modern and sensible one – I can well imagine that individual sequences between lessons would help children very much, especially those who have difficulty concentrating, to refocus or simply to clear their heads.

So, thumbs up for this seminar! Thanks a million!

### T. K.

When I began my studies, I thought that they would be just as easy for me as it was while finishing my technical baccalaureate; to manage everything reasonably well without a lot of effort. However, already in the first semester (engineering and management), I realized that, this time, it wouldn't work out that way. The sheer quantity and volume of subjects was overwhelming compared to regular school.

In the first semester I failed in 1/6 subjects, in the second in 4/8, and in the third semester in 1/7, which forced me to try a third time. In the fourth semester I failed the last 2/7 exams and since then I have passed everything more or less right away. As you can probably imagine, all the second attempts and one third attempt (especially in my general studies) caused additional pressure that I didn't know how to relieve. This led to complete nervous breakdowns during exam preparation, which were so bad that my mother wanted me to temporarily quit my studies. Once I had, to some extent, come through the third examination phase of my studies, and it was over, it was





clear to me that something had to change. I looked for ways to reduce stress and even attended some seminars on how to deal with stress. There it was often said that for some people meditation offers a refuge.

As I had already heard in my first semester, from friends who were further along in their studies than me, how enthusiastic they were about your course, I have been trying to get into your course ever since. Unfortunately without success.

When my last semester was approaching and I still had an elective subject open that I had “saved” in the hope of getting into your course, I thought I’d write you an email just before the start of the semester. You were so kind to accommodate me and made it possible for me to participate in your course despite once again not landing a place in the lottery. For this, I am really very grateful to you!

I have gained so much from your course that it would likely go beyond the scope of this journal entry to describe it all in more detail. Therefore I would like to concentrate on what is by far the most important thing for me, mindfulness. I notice how the habit of mindfulness has helped me to live a much more intense lifestyle, and by intense I do not mean more action-packed, but rather a more conscious perception of my surroundings and myself. Already in this short time I’ve learned to listen much more to my inner being and to work on myself much more.

I have even managed to delete all social media apps from my smartphone and use the time to spend a quiet 5 minutes with myself rather than constantly staring at the phone and checking what’s new.

Now I know that it’s not important if anything new is happening on social media, because I haven’t even really explored what I already know – namely my immediate surroundings, and in particular myself. And that’s my next goal. To get to know my inner self better and to create a permanent sanctuary for when I have a quiet minute or two.

I would like to thank you for your open-minded, friendly and sympathetic manner and also for giving me the opportunity to be part of your course.

## W. W.

Before each lesson, we’d first discuss everyday things or talk about the previous lesson. I liked this very much and this is one of the reasons why I find this “class” better than the usual ones, because it’s personal and it’s really concerned with us students as human beings and not as “working machines”. Of course, this also depends on one’s course of studies, but I, for example, study business administration and there isn’t much attention given to the students. Or it’s simply not about being human, which is clear. But it’s also a pity, because you still have to deal with people and you also mustn’t forget yourself.

# Statements

A. L. This is one thing I took with me from the course. I have control over my reactions and can decide how I want to respond.

A. P. Z. The silence gives the body time to recover. It's another situation where meditation helps – as is often the case.

C. B. Wonderful! It was very quick to enter into meditation. I was also able to easily “let go” of thoughts and ignore other sounds.

How was it? – It was easy! I was even able to completely forget and tune out the other people. I was completely with myself.

C. M. After waking up I did a sitting meditation for 10 minutes. It helped me greatly to put my thoughts in order and to start the day with a clear head.

F. E. I really like the practice of loving kindness. I think a lot more people should do this kind of exercise.

F. S. The wind got stronger and weaker – just as my thoughts did.

J. Z. When I went for a walk on the weekend, I walked mindfully, perceiving intensively the movements of my body and the different surfaces and concentrating only on walking. I was able to sort out my thoughts and afterwards I felt clear in my head.

Bit by bit the meditation exercises are exhibiting positive effects in my life.

I was very aware of my breath between the two exercises. He led the way and I followed him. I was totally content.

M. B.

I find it difficult not to pay attention to noises (construction noise, dog, voices).

I immediately start to evaluate everything that happens while meditating.

I was only able to keep a state of concentration for a very short time (my head rather planned this entry ... )

M. K.

During the body scan I partly drifted off towards sleep ...

Nature is a great "location for meditation".

In my everyday life my thoughts often jump from one topic to the next. I then feel stressed and often put myself under pressure. The peace and quiet inside me is missing. Therefore I am happy that I have had the opportunity to participate in the "Meditation" seminar "as part of my studies. To experience different things concerning meditation and to let go of my fears, to some extent, through meditation exercises in order to be more "centered" again.

M. M.

For me, the mantra is like a wheel, on which I can ride without getting off. Internally it allows me to feel free. Completely undisturbed by thoughts. The mantra hinders any thoughts or distractions.

N. H.

Today's meditation was like arriving, coming home, feeling content.

I did a sitting meditation for about 20 minutes in which I concentrated only on my breathing.

N. S.



## Meditation im Hochschulkontext am Beispiel des Münchner Modells



The film *Shanti* (Bachelor thesis, see p. 70) is available at [www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell](http://www.hm.edu/meditationsmodell).

# Feedback from Students Interviewed in the Film *Shanti*

## What happens in the courses?

### A. S. Social Work

I would call the loving kindness exercise an exercise in compassion. So, you think of a person that you like very much and then you consciously send energy to this person, while imagining the connection you feel to them. And through this imagining, through this opening of the heart, something simply happens.

A more difficult exercise is: you imagine someone you have no connection to – for example, a bus driver you just saw. And you send energy to him as well, that same warm, loving energy you feel for someone you really like.

And then, in the most difficult exercise, you imagine someone you simply do not like, or who really annoys you, and you send out that energy to them and something happens – so a lot is going on there. Even if, in the beginning you have to overcome yourself, maybe because the ego is a bit in the way, in the end it also benefits you.

### J. H. Social Work

The mindfulness day that we did was really exciting, simply for the reason that we got to spend longer than just 1.5 hours of a semester class to indulge in some specific meditation theme. [...]

We did walking meditation. We walked around the garden for about a quarter of an hour just focusing on our feet and on walking. [...]

We did mindful cooking, where we tried to cook a meal together without speaking to the other 15 characters participating. That was an impressive experience because, in the end I did not think it would work as well as it did. The special thing was that although no one was speaking, we somehow arranged and agreed without conversation to create a meal and then at the end of the day share dinner together, and it was surprisingly good.

## Projects – the Munich Model in practice

### J. H. Social Work

Basically, the idea came to me that meditation offers another tool that enables me to come into contact with and work with young people. In my case, I see that the daily lives of young people engaged with competitive sports are influenced by a rigid structure, with a lot of stress, and expectations on all sides. Then I realized that I can apply what I myself have experienced in this course, to my work with young people. And here with these adolescents in a meditation lesson – which was then also effectively maybe only 10 minutes – we can still create a framework together that enables them to leave behind the constant pressure of this world of tennis.

### H. B. Social Work

My project was to implement a group for volunteer hospice attendants at a inpatient hospice facility, for the regular practice of mindfulness and meditation together, as well as the application of these practices in their work. I've learned so much by observing Andreas de Bruin through his meditation courses, how one can be guided through the topic, at the same time sharing background knowledge. The end result for me was really positive. My project was very well-received and the people were really excited, so I would say it was a success. I did this project in 2014 as a bachelor's thesis and up to now – 2017 – the group still exists.

### A. S. Social Work

We went to an elementary school together and developed a project on the theme of mindfulness in primary school. We thought about which exercises would be best [...]. The kids really enjoyed participating and it was fun. Just to be in class, to see how the kids participate and how they engage in the exercises. We just did classic exercises: the raisin exercise, the lemon exercise, the relaxation visu-



alization exercise, abdominal breathing . . . , it was so well received, that the school now also intends to continue the program in cooperation with the university, and is pleased to hear from students who have further ideas to contribute.

## How does one grade meditation? The potential for our educational system

### I. B. Evaluated the Munich Model for her Bachelor Thesis

This also reflects my own thoughts a bit – that this space for self-reflection and going inward is simply not considered in our education system. And I just believe that all this knowledge we get there on a daily basis is overwhelming sometimes, and that we also need time to be and grow together, through an inner maturation process. And I believe it's just about this, as well as that. You combine things and promote intuition and personality and self-development, self-reflection – as well as the transfer of knowledge.

## What does Science know about Meditation?

### P. K Communication Design

The stress was really something. I'd say I experienced at times very high levels of tension. And the meditation has made it possible for me to slow down – somehow to see things as not so important.

Then we also have the amygdala. This is the area which becomes active when anxiety is triggered. And we see that this area is smaller for meditators, so it would appear that we are dealing with certain things differently again, so anxiety doesn't develop. We know that in the insular cortex, body perception and the connection to one's emotions is strengthened, so that you register faster if you're excited and that also you can better register and make use of the impulses of the body. In regulating the emotional response, one has to consider how we deal with emotions, and for example, when anger comes up you might stop and think for a moment, or consider other options than being furious or upset, and this helped me a lot in reducing my own stress.

### L. O. Chemical Engineering

For example, in contentious situations, I am more relaxed. I think differently, react differently and not so hastily. Mainly I think about it before I respond and I try to put myself in the others' shoes.

### I. B. Evaluated the Munich Model for her Bachelor Thesis

It is worth noting that the students who rate themselves as more attentive also act with more self-efficacy or experience themselves as self-effective, meaning that their subjective beliefs independently give them strength to change certain situations or it strengthens their own efforts.

# Experiences from Implementation in Practice

As part of the Munich Model, students independently carry out mindfulness and meditation projects in their professional fields after completing their studies. Some have become lecturers, as well. In the following section, a selection of these students report on their experiences.

## A. U. Graduate of the Munich University of Applied Sciences

**How the Munich model “Mindfulness and Meditation in a University Context” has influenced my studies as well as my further professional path.**

Although I'd already practiced yoga before my bachelor's degree in social work at the University of Applied Sciences in Munich, it was still a mystery to me what “meditation” was really all about. I then heard during my studies about the various meditation courses offered. As I was eager to learn more about this topic, but could never get a seat in the courses, I decided to ask Prof. de Bruin if I could just audit his lectures.

I felt very lucky to be allowed to participate in this way. Through these lectures I came more and more to understand what meditation really means. From that time on, I was hooked and I wanted to learn as much as possible about it. I made an effort to combine all possible educational credits with the topic of “Mindfulness and Meditation”, in order to engage with it at the level of science. In my practical semester, while working with children, I also experienced the positive effects that an attitude of mindfulness promotes. For this reason, I also chose this topic for my bachelor thesis, which reinforced my decision to integrate “mindfulness and meditation” in my further (educational) work. When, as part of a course, we were asked to create a business plan a topic of our choice, the foundation stone for my small business “Meditation Gives You Wings” was laid, and I started my own business in early 2017.

I am very grateful that through these lectures I was able to learn meditation at an early age, as it has since played an indispensable role in both my private and professional

life. It's the reason I decided to undertake training as an MBSR teacher, based on the method of Jon Kabat-Zinn (Stress Reduction through Mindfulness) parallel to my subsequent Master's program (Diagnostics, Coaching and Intervention) at the Munich University of Applied Sciences. This, as well as further training as an MSC trainer (Mindful Self-Compassion), has left an powerful and lasting impression on me. In my master's thesis I also deal with mindful self-compassion and research “The relevance of mindful self-compassion as a resource for students of social work”. The goal is to find out what effects this form of practice has on people, especially in the helping professions, for example in dealing with caregiver fatigue, as well as how it enriches pedagogical work.

In winter semester 2019/20 a dream of mine came true when I was allowed to take over one of Prof. de Bruin's courses on the topic of “Mindfulness and Self-Compassion in Studies” at the Munich University of Applied Sciences. It was incredibly enjoyable to meditate together with the students for a whole semester and to talk about important theoretical topics and scientific findings in the context of mindfulness and (self-)compassion, as well as discussing together how and where these forms of practice can be used in one's own life, in one's studies and especially in one's later professional life as a social education worker.

## G. B. Graduate of the Technical University of Munich

### **Meditation at university?**

A fellow student told me about an elective course where one learns to meditate. I paused for a moment. Learning to meditate at university – a strange concept. He said that the seminar was completely overbooked, but I should come to the first class and ask if there was still a place for me. Well, I thought to myself, I have nothing to lose. Meditation in a university context. It crossed my mind that anyway, if it was no good, at least there were some easily earned ECTS credits. No sooner said than done. Soon I was sitting in a room with many other students

who also wanted to participate in the seminar “Meditation at School” for prospective teachers. And then the “meditation professor” Andreas de Bruin arrived. He seemed like a very normal person. No baggy pants, no incense sticks, no “OM” as a greeting. Without much explanation he drew a flying elephant on an until-then white canvas and asked us, what did it mean? Turned out later: buzzing thoughts. Shortly after this, an anchor was put on the elephant to prevent it from freely trampling everything or, rather to keep it from flying low.

And that was the beginning of a long journey for me, a journey into the world of mindfulness. This seminar was to change my life. We now met once a week for joint mindfulness exercises. Meditations while walking and sitting, a body scan while lying down, conscious eating. The peaceful silence that matured in me during these exercises had a great effect on me. I felt so relieved after each meditation and was incredibly grateful for these tools. I also had the good fortune that Andreas de Bruin invited me to the annual MBSR conference (Stress Reduction through Mindfulness) in Munich, as an assistant. After that weekend there was no doubt in my mind that I would be doing an MBSR training!

And now, seven years and about twenty MBSR courses later, I’m sitting on the meditation cushion telling the incoming students something about buzzing thoughts that can be tamed with a little discipline and lightness, thus reducing stress. I am very grateful that LMU has made such an innovative project possible under the leadership of Andreas de Bruin, thereby assuming a pioneering position in Europe.

### C. K. Graduate of the Munich University of Applied Sciences

Before her death, my mother was positively transformed by a daily one-hour meditation, over a period of five years. So, I was very curious a few years later as a young adult when meditation was actually offered as a subject at our university and for which one received educational credits, thereby progressing.

Through meditating I realized what it means to be totally present, to be alive and also to feel that thoughts are just patterns and opportunities that, without mindfulness, we normally just internalize by acting and reacting accordingly. Meditation became for me the way to

achieve freedom from thoughts. Not only to experience phases of total silence of thought, but also a total distancing from thought. In the end, most of the suffering I experienced by the loss of my mother was based on painful thought constructs. [...]

Recognizing the value of meditation and mindfulness, I felt enthusiastically moved to bring more mindfulness into social work and decided to pursue a career as an addiction therapist after my studies. I was amazed to find that mindfulness has for long been implemented here and pervades all therapeutic processes, from trauma therapy to behavioral therapy. In the groups I participated in, the answer to the question of what clients who had undergone therapy considered most important, for example in the case of potential relapses, was often: mindfulness. And so my therapeutic response will also remain mindfulness, because it brings us nearer to ourselves and to life. It is the foundation that keeps emotions from overwhelming us and that enables us to better recognize and let go of toxic views about our past and future. Thanks to the Munich Model and thanks to Andreas de Bruin!

### Drug counselling in prison

At an introductory drug counselling session I had 20 people mandated by the juvenile court to participate in an addiction counseling session. We had the great luxury of letting them choose between a lesson in mindfulness and the normal drug counseling, which is anything but normal. We did a Buddhist body scan and breathing meditation (Anapana), watched a film sequence about meditation at a school in a problem neighborhood in Baltimore and talked about mindfulness in general. We also had a “snow globe” with us, to symbolize the thought traffic that reigns within us and limits our happiness – because the soul or soul forces can only show themselves when there is silence.

In the individual counseling sessions, among other things, I introduced mindfulness in such a way that an empty chair is reserved for it. During the conversation I try to bring focused attention to the body, which is our access to the here and now. What is happening? The chair provides the opportunity to sit down in the place of mindfulness, thus taking a step back and seeing oneself from a distance: what does Mindfulness perceive in you now?

## A. S. Graduate of the LMU Munich

During my studies, I took part in the Munich Model and now I'm furthering it, through teaching and research at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich. Meditation and mindfulness were already a part of my life before I had the good fortune to deepen them in the context of the "Meditation at School" course in my teacher training. Inspired by the idea of passing on the valuable life enrichment that meditation and mindfulness brings, I pursued a doctorate on "Mindfulness and Meditation at Schools" after my state examination and master's degree.

### Meditation in school

For my doctoral thesis I developed a meditation and mindfulness program with teenage students, which was anchored in the curriculum during a regular class period. Through numerous practical exercises, the youth are given a space in which they can develop a more intensive perception of their body as well as their thoughts and feelings. In addition, they deal with topics such as concentration and self-regulation and learn facts from psychology and neuroscience. More than one hundred students in Munich, between the ages of 10 and 18, participated in the program as well as in the accompanying study, which will be published with my dissertation. A fifth grader reported: "I particularly liked the fact that we were able to close our eyes and simply allowed to be with ourselves." A sixth-grade student noted: "I feel much more balanced now."

### Meditation at the university

Besides my doctorate, I also have the opportunity to introduce meditation and mindfulness to students of primary and special needs education at the LMU Munich. In regular seminars, prospective teachers experience the effects of these exercises, which will help strengthen their resilience for the future. They also have the opportunity to lead exercises themselves. The participants appreciate "the varied exercises, adapted to elementary school" as well as "the scientific background and theoretical insights". The young people obviously also personally benefit. One student sums it up: "The seminar showed me ways to feel good and enjoy life."

In my experience, ensuring that meditation and mindfulness has a place in school and university is an important step into the future. Only those who experience themselves can truly develop their potential to lead a self-determined, successful and happy life.

## A. M. H. Graduate of the Munich University of Applied Sciences

I was born in Landshut, Lower Bavaria where at the age of 21, I completed my training as a state-certified pre-school teacher. As I worked for one year as the group leader of a municipal childcare center, it seemed ever more clear to me that important elements in upbringing and education, crucial for the continued development of even the youngest children, were often neglected or even lost in everyday life. So I decided to further my personal and professional development through an "Early Childhood Education" degree program at the University of Applied Sciences in Munich, leading to a state-approved early childhood education specialist qualification.

In my studies, I attended the course "Methods of Stress Management" with Professor Andreas de Bruin, as part of the Munich Model. As we tried out various methods and forms of meditation and mindfulness in the first few classes, I already noticed the first positive changes in my ability to concentrate and in my inner balance. Since we were instructed to keep a meditation journal for the duration of a semester, I integrated specific exercises into my daily routine. Through regular meditation I felt clearer in my thoughts, more relaxed and more cheerful. These effects are confirmed by some scientific studies, and this brought me back to the initial question that had originally motivated my studies. I had now discovered what elements – so important for a child's development – were missing in the education and upbringing of children.

Throughout my studies I continued to expand my exercise of mindfulness. I noticed many positive effects on my family and friends. Overall, my daily life became more carefree and I was able to face difficult challenges more easily. This brought me to the connection between mindfulness and resilience in difficult life situations. A desire quickly grew in me to scientifically substantiate these connections. I decided to write my bachelor thesis with Prof. de Bruin as my supervisor because he had guided me through the previous stages and had set me on

this path through his classes. The initial question of my thesis focused on the connections between mindfulness in day care centers and the strengthening of factors of personal resilience.

As I was so impressed by the results of various studies on this subject, I simultaneously trained as a relaxation education specialist for children at the “fitmedi” academy for independent health professions and became a promoter of resilience training in day-care centers at the Protestant University of Applied Sciences in Freiburg, Germany, in cooperation with the Centre for Child and Youth Research, led by Ms. Rönna-Böse and Mr. Fröhlich-Gildhoff.

Afterwards I launched my own company, “Heldenstärke”, by offering various courses on relaxation techniques for children and adults. Soon, my courses were recognized by various health insurance companies as a successful preventative offering for health and stress, and “Kita-Aktuell” – a professional journal published by Wolters-Kluwer for day-care center providers and managers – took notice of my work.

After I had successfully completed my bachelor thesis, Prof. de Bruin helped me write an article for “Kita-Aktuell” on the same topic, “Mindfulness and resilience in daycare centers”, which was recently published.

Meanwhile, at the age of 24, I give several advanced trainings and seminars for professionals, parents and enthusiasts, I run a day care center for children and regularly host prevention courses for children and adults. Looking back on the last three years, it’s clear that attending the course “Methods of Stress Management” was pivotal in my professional development.

## A. S. Graduate of the Munich University of Applied Sciences

### Mindfulness in the pre-school curative education day care

The eight children in my group are between 3 and 6 years old and are looked after by me and another teacher. We live together between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., as in a small family. Our group is situated in a home that promotes values such as mindfulness and humanity through lived example.

In my work, I feel so enriched by the mindfulness and spirit of discovery that the children bring with them.

The singing bowl ritual gives our group a gentle start to the day. We come together in the morning circle, the children hold hands; I hold the singing bowl in my hand and let it sound once. The children listen to the sound until the end and then, when they no longer hear it, they sit down.

We also practice mindfulness when we play with sand. We have three Zen gardens in the group and at times the children are completely absorbed in raking them and designing their own garden. They can redesign it, again and again.

We practice mindfulness as we observe animals; we are very quiet, so as not to frighten them. We’re connected with the one moment in which we pause. We like to watch the two squirrels in front of our balcony door when they get food from the food box we fill together. We watch the animals drinking in the rain gutter and do gymnastics as they climb trees. The children are very focused and attentive. Afterwards, we reflect on what we have just observed.

We did the lemon exercise together and noticed that most of us found it difficult to imagine a lemon. So we did a preliminary exercise and offered the children a real lemon wedge to bite into. We noticed how sour a lemon is. To my astonishment, lemon became their favorite fruit. All week long they wanted lemons for dessert.

In children’s yoga we practice the first figures such as cat, cow, dog and mountain.

Last spring there was a sensory parcours with various exercises. The feet are great tactile instruments, and there are different surfaces to walk on. Some children have the trust to walk on them with their eyes closed.

After lunch together, it’s time to relax. During our break we regularly relax through an imaginary journey that leads to peace and quiet. The children like to have a say in the content. The children have a lot of ideas, and we try to take them up and respond as best we can.

When consciously arranged with the children, playing the guitar, making music and singing are all little exercises in mindfulness. We try to create a framework for this and always show them what kind of interaction we’re striving for, because if you’re not calm and mindful yourself, you can’t convey it to others either.

I look forward to the day that mindfulness becomes firmly established in other institutions.



What's particularly positive is that the children are friendlier to each other and also approach their fellow human beings more respectfully. There is less quarrelling, and more peaceful play. In this respect, the fixed rituals of the group's daily routine are supporting them.

### J. F. S. Graduate of the LMU Munich

Mindfulness for me means the deep authenticity and integrity of being the author of one's own life. To me, cultivating mindfulness means: to live an awake, conscious and present life. With the intention of wanting to live such a life, I came across meditation and mindfulness.

I can think of several biographical points of reference for mindfulness. Although there may not be only one decisive point, there are a number of experiences that have significantly influenced the path I am following today: the search for mental balance and self-acceptance since puberty, a serious sports injury in my early twenties and the handling of this challenge physically and mentally, the desire to live a clear and enlightened life. After a lot of trial and error, I now practice mainly Qigong and mindfulness and meditation every day. The qualities of BEING awake, BEING conscious, BEING present are inherent in every human being, but to what extent and with what depth this is achieved is probably the decisive factor. A certain amount of practice, a cultivation of the posture of mindfulness, is needed to make it truly tangible and a lived experience. It is especially important to me that mindfulness is fostered in the educational institutions of our society. For this reason, I am working on a systematized concept of mindfulness for teacher training in the context of my doctorate. Additionally, I facilitate a seminar called "Mindfulness in Pedagogy" at the University of Passau, as well as workshops at the LMU Munich and the MZL Munich. I also organize trainings – for example at PROFiL at the LMU Munich or at the Elite Network of Bavaria – and give lectures on the theme of mindfulness, especially in the context of universities and schools.



# APPENDIX

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# Afterword

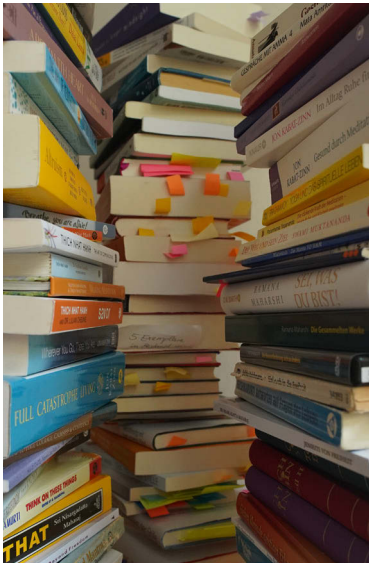
The Munich Model has continually evolved since its launch in March 2010, and has become an integral part of the university curriculum. The mindfulness and meditation exercises are appreciated by participants for many reasons: as an innovative and meaningful program to prepare them for their future professional fields, to help them cope with study workloads, as support in reducing daily stress, and generally as a means of greater self discovery.

With the global outbreak of the new respiratory disease Covid-19 at the start of 2020 and the temporary restrictions imposed on everyday life to contain the pandemic, the Munich model has also had to face entirely new challenges. Suddenly, in-person classes were replaced by online classes.

The experiences of the last few months attest to the value of the Munich Model's innovative approach. The program's online courses and associated practical exercises offered students an inner sense of connection and belonging in this period of isolation.

It remains to be seen how universities will continue their operations in upcoming semesters. The Munich Model will maintain its relevance, as it proves that the teachings in mindfulness and meditation – known since time immemorial and adapted to our modern world today, offer students valuable support for their studies and for life in general.





# List of Sources for Key Citations

## Paradigm Shift

*“Your spiritual Self is calling you every day. You must realize that you are not this body, but the Infinite Spirit within.”*

**Paramahansa Yogananda (1893–1952)**

Yogananda, Paramahansa (2010). *How to Have Courage, Calmness and Confidence*. Nevada City: Crystal Clarity Publishers, p. 68.

*“The Self is that where there is absolutely no “I” thought. That is called Silence.”*

**Ramana Maharshi (1879–1950)**

Maharshi, Ramana (2004). *The Spiritual Teaching of Ramana Maharshi*. Boulder: Shamballa Publications, Inc., p. 8.

## Self, Soul and Mind

*“The essential feature of consciousness of the Self is therefore continuity, permanence. But that of the conscious I is only a pale reflection of the eternal, immortal essence of the spiritual I, the Self.”*

**Roberto Assagioli (1888–1974)**

Assagioli, Roberto (2008). *Psychosynthese und transpersonale Entwicklung*. Rümlang / Zürich: Nawo Verlag GmbH, p. 32 [Author’s translation].

*“The soul acts as a protector during our lives, and is always with us. It has no wishes of its own. It is not only a witness or guide but also helps our development. Free from the influence of our actions, it remains permanently with us through our lives until we unite with the Divine.”*

**Mother Meera**

Mother Meera (2019). *Answers*. Part I. Dornburg-Thalheim: Mother Meera, p. 125.

## The Heart, Love and The Self

*“But the moment you have in your heart this extraordinary thing called love and feel the depth, the delight, the ecstasy of it, you will discover that for you the world is transformed.”*

**Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986)**

Krishnamurti, Jiddu (1989). *Think on These Things*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, p. 192.

*“People who truly know and experience the scriptures understand things not just from books but from the heart. And the heart is the greatest library.”*

**Swami Chidvilasananda**

Chidvilasananda, Swami (Gurumayi) (1999). *Courage and Contentment. A Collection of Talks on Spiritual Life*. South Fallsburg: SYDA Foundation, p. 56

## Intellect and Intuition

*“Intuition is a divine gift, the thinking mind a faithful servant. It is paradoxical that nowadays we have begun to worship the servant and desecrate the divine gift.”*

**Albert Einstein (1879–1955)**

Indirect quotation, source is no longer found [AdB].

## Research

*“If you want to understand the mind, then meditate.”*

**Buddhist monk**

Morel, Delphine (2016). *Monks in the Laboratory*, 17:37 min

*“This is the experience of everyone who starts to meditate [...], that these practices do much more, that they enrich your life in an inexplicable way and help you in things you didn't know you needed help with before.”*

**Sara Lazar**

Lazar, Sara (2015). “Die neurowissenschaftliche Erforschung der Meditation“, in: Zimmermann, Michael / Spitz, Christof / Schmidt, Stefan (Eds.), *Achtsamkeit. Ein buddhistisches Konzept erobert die Wissenschaft*. Bern: Verlag Hans Huber, p. 80 [Author's translation].

*“The earth would be a different place if we spent the same amount of time on caring for our mind as we do on brushing our teeth.”*

**Richard Davidson**

Davidson, Richard (2019c). “Interview”, in: *Moment by Moment*, Ausgabe 01. Freiburg: Hammer Solutions Media, p. 49 [Author's translation].

## Sitting Meditations

*“To achieve an interior act, a man must collect all his powers as if into a corner of his soul where, hiding away from all images and forms, he can get to work. Here, he must come to a forgetting and an unknowing.”*

**Meister Eckhart (1260–1327)**

Meister Eckhart (2009). *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, p. 43.

*“The highest meditation is the state of complete inner stillness. In that state, not a single thought arises in the mind. However, most people cannot attain this state of stillness right away. For that reason, it is of the greatest importance for a meditator to understand how to deal with the mind.”*

**Swami Muktananda (1908-1982)**

Muktananda, Swami (1999). *Meditate. Happiness Lies Within You*. South Fallsburg: SYDA Foundation, p. 18.

## Mindfulness in Daily Life

*“To allow ourselves to be truly in touch with where we already are, no matter where that is, we have got to pause in our experience long enough to let the present moment sink in; long enough to actually feel the present moment, to see it in its fullness, to hold it in awareness and thereby come to know and understand it better.”*

**Jon Kabat-Zinn**

Kabat-Zinn, Jon (1994). *Wherever You Go, There You Are. Mindfulness Meditation for Everyday Life*. London: Piatkus, p. xi-xii.

## Mindful Cooking and Eating

*“Learning to eat and live mindfully is the key to experiencing health and peace.”*

**Thich Nhat Hanh / Lilian Cheung**

Thich Nhat Hanh / Cheung, Lilian (2010). *Savor. Mindful Eating, Mindful Life*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, p. 1.

## Mindful Communication

*“It's helpful to remember at the beginning of every communication with another person that there is a Buddha inside each of us.”*

**Thich Nhat Hanh**

Thich Nhat Hanh (2013). *The Art of Communicating*. London: Rider, p. 39 f.

## Body Scan

*“When we put energy into actually experiencing our body and we refuse to get caught up in the overlay of judgmental thinking about it, our whole view of it and of ourself can change dramatically.”*

**Jon Kabat-Zinn**

Kabat-Zinn, Jon (2013). *Full Catastrophe Living. Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. New York: Bantam Books, p. 76.

## Loving Kindness

*“All of spiritual practice is a matter of relationship: to ourselves, to others, to life’s situations. We can relate with a spirit of wisdom, compassion, and flexibility, or we can meet life with fear, aggression, and delusion. Whether we like it or not, we are always in relationship, always interconnected.”*

### **Jack Kornfield**

Kornfield, Jack (1993). *A Path with Heart. A Guide Through the Perils and Promises of Spiritual Life*. New York: Bantam Books, p. 287.

## Walking Meditation

*“The first thing to do is to lift your foot. Breathe in. Put your foot down in front of you, first your heel and then your toes. Breathe out. Feel your feet solid on the Earth. You have already arrived.”*

### **Thich Nhat Hanh**

Thich Nhat Hanh (2016). *How to Walk*. London: Rider, p. 11.

## Sutras

*“The more deeply we observe, the greater our mental concentration becomes. Stopping and collecting our mind, we naturally become able to see.”*

### **Thich Nhat Hanh**

Thich Nhat Hanh (2008). *Breathe, you are alive! The Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing*. Berkeley: Parallax Press, p. 140.

## Sound Meditation

*“Hearing draws in more, but seeing rather leads outward – the very act of seeing does this. Therefore in eternal life we shall rejoice far more in our power of hearing than in that of sight.”*

### **Meister Eckhart (1260–1327)**

Meister Eckhart (2009). *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, p. 43 f.







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13.6.19

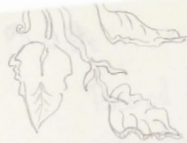


Blüten trocknen  
& einkleben ist  
auch eine Form der  
Achtsamkeit

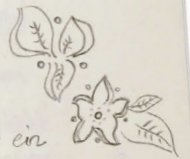


Duften sogar

16.6.19



Sonntags ist Zeit da.  
Für eine Meditation.



Ich weiß, ich weiß... "Zeit" ist ein  
abstrakter Begriff. "Zeit haben" ist noch  
abstrakter, fast schon skurril.

Trotzdem, Sonntag "habe ich Zeit" für eine  
Meditation. Ich muss sie mir nicht "nehmen",  
ich muss mich vor niemandem rechtfertigen  
sie "in Anspruch zu nehmen", ich muss  
auch nicht großartig "planen" zwischen  
welchen Tätigkeiten & Verpflichtungen ich  
"meine Zeit" für eine Meditation hinein  
packe.

Ich weiß, ich weiß... die Zeit für eine  
Meditation muss man sich nicht nehmen,  
man kann sie sich schenken!

Aber an einem Sonntag fällt das Schenken  
gleich viel leichter!

# A Message from Our Benefactors

I first came into contact with the Munich Model and its initiator, Andreas de Bruin in 2018 at a network meeting for (former) students. He then invited me to participate in some of his meditation courses. Meditating together with him and his students both touched and inspired me. What’s so unique about the Munich model is that its courses allow the freedom of self-awareness and self-development, spontaneously, creatively, and with acceptance. The participants are given the space they need to experience an atmosphere of loving, non-judgmental togetherness. This is an important experience for young people who, in a very one-sided way, have up to now faced only competition and the expectations of achievement in the educational sector.

The variety of impressions and experiences shared in this book reflects the diversity and uniqueness of the participants and their development. And it shows the openness of the Munich model – it doesn’t restrict, nor does it exclude. It enables each individual to develop and learn with joy, in a completely natural way, without external obligation or judgement by the teacher. What would be the point of judging? Inner growth cannot be forced by will, nor can it be bought with money or solicited by prayer. We cannot “make it happen” or even control the process – and that’s also a good thing.

*Verein für Achtsamkeit in Osterloh e.V.  
Maria Kluge*

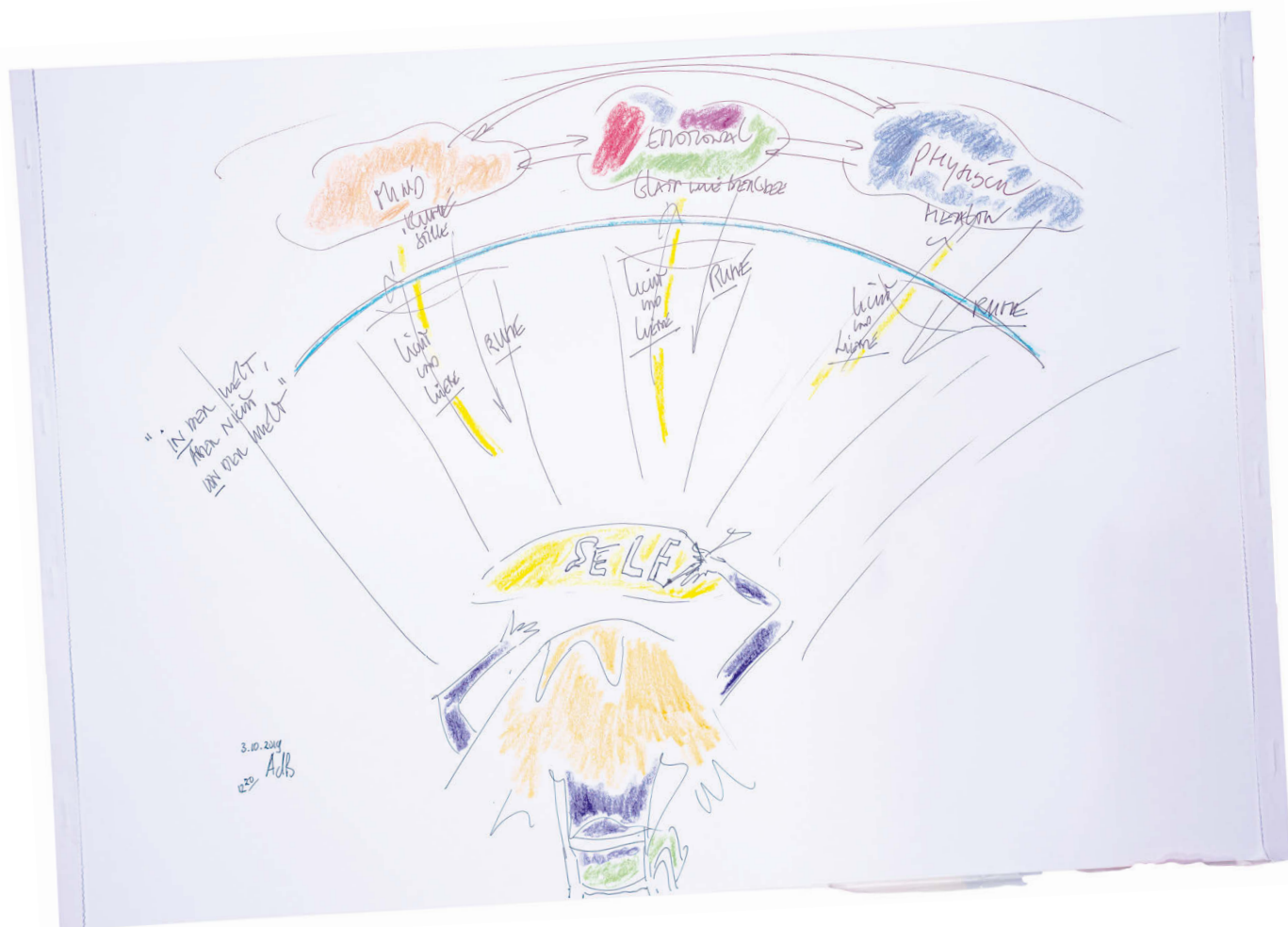


A fundamental task of the Edith-Haberland-Wagner Foundation is to make life more worth living for present and future generations. With its event series “Forum für den Wandel” it provides inspiring incentives and initiates a dialogue on how to shape our present and future in a meaningful way. With this in mind, the Edith-Haberland-Wagner Foundation has decided to promote the Munich model “Mindfulness and Meditation in a University Context”. The programs offered within the framework of the model, especially the courses for students, provide fertile ground for new experiences and generate a positive impact on mental hygiene, concentration, self-esteem and self-efficacy, as well as creativity and empathy and compassion. Many students also apply its teaching approaches later in their professional fields after graduation, such as in day-care centers and schools; in this way, the respective on-site target groups also benefit from them. Above all, as a successful example, the Munich Model inspires other universities and educational institutions to engage with the topics of mindfulness and meditation and to implement approaches locally, whenever possible. It therefore contributes in a variety of ways to positive social change.

*Board of the Edith-Haberland-Wagner Foundation  
Catherine Demeter, Martin Liebhäuser*



Edith-Haberland-Wagner  
Stiftung



# About the Author



*Andreas de Bruin* was born in Delft, the Netherlands in 1965. After completing his studies in Industrial Engineering and Management in Rijswijk, he studied Psychology in Leiden and Heidelberg, then Social and Cultural Anthropology in Munich. He was awarded a Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology in 2003 and was appointed as a professor for aesthetic media at the Munich University of Applied Sciences (MUAS) in 2006. As part of an educational and research partnership, he also teaches at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU) Munich.

De Bruin’s principal area of research and teaching is mindfulness and meditation, and in particular the effects of these practices on physical, emotional, cognitive and social levels. De Bruin began his own practice of meditation in 1991. He also teaches conscious awareness in painting and classical music, giftedness and creativity in general.

De Bruin is the founder and head of the Munich Model “Mindfulness and Meditation in a University Context” – one of the first programs in Europe to offer university classes in mindfulness and meditation that also award academic credit. In addition to regular courses, he also organizes additional courses for (former) students, teaching staff and university employees. In order to share his experience, de Bruin works closely with other universities in Germany and abroad. A sought-after speaker on this topic, he has been interviewed many times and his work has been featured in a wide variety of print publications and broadcast media.

In addition, de Bruin regularly hosts a free series of public lectures and film screenings entitled “Spiritual Teachers and Their Teachings”. His most recent project, “Meditation and Art”, teaches the conscious observation of the paintings of the Great Masters.

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