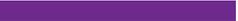




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Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention for Problem Gambling, Second Edition

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Preface

We developed this resource in response to a growing demand for a resource that would incorporate mindfulness into problem gambling treatment. Clinicians from the Problem Gambling Treatment System, for example, had been looking for a gambling-specific mindfulness manual that they could use with their clients.

Over the last three decades, mindfulness has been increasingly integrated into mental health and addiction programs and is gradually being incorporated into programs specific to problem gambling. The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's (CAMH) Problem Gambling Service, which is part of the Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario (PGIO) for example, has been offering mindfulness groups as a regular part of programming since 2010. (In 2017, this Problem Gambling Service was renamed Problem Gambling and Technology Use Service.)

Problem gambling clinicians began introducing mindfulness groups in part because they felt clients could benefit from learning ways to be more aware of their thoughts and emotions while detaching from and not giving in to them. This practise is particularly relevant to people with gambling problems who tend to hold incorrect or erroneous beliefs about the nature of random chance (Toneatto et al., 1997; Turner, 2006) and engage in automatic thinking before, during and after gambling (Jacobs, 1988; Gupta & Derevensky, 1998).

People with gambling problems tend to have more cognitive distortions to address than people with substance addictions, but also have fewer physiological withdrawal

issues. People with gambling problems also tend to be higher functioning and less likely to have impaired cognitive abilities than people with substance use problems because gambling does not harm the brain. This means that self-awareness may be easier for people with gambling problems to develop than for other addiction clients, but people with gambling problems may also be very good at denial and rationalization. For example, gamblers will come up with systems such as doubling their bets after a loss, believing that they can beat the odds (see Turner, 1998) and are good at finding reasons to justify their gambling, even when the systems fail (see Toneatto et al., 1997). Moderate and severe gambling problems affect approximately 2.5 per cent of the adult population in Ontario or about 332,000 adults (Williams & Volberg, 2013). People with problems related to gambling may also have other co-occurring mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, and other behavioural challenges, such as substance use problems, internet overuse, overeating, compulsive shopping or unhealthy relationships (see Malat et al., 2010).

In Ontario, treatment for people with gambling problems was first implemented in 1995, in response to the opening of the province's first commercial casino in Windsor. With extensive clinical experience and excellent research since then, knowledge about what constitutes effective treatment has been growing, but no one approach suits everyone. Treatment services have instead tended to adopt an eclectic and holistic approach, incorporating a biopsychosocial-spiritual model that draws on different methods for different clients, recognizing people's diverse needs. As part of this more holistic approach, mindfulness offers a more body-centred model, rather than the usual talk therapy.

Introduction

The Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention for Problem Gambling (MBRPPG) program is intended for clients attending problem gambling treatment in the action or maintenance stages of change. These are clients who have already stopped or cut down on their gambling and who see abstinence or controlled gambling as their ultimate goal.

This program was developed based on the structure and format of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR; Kabat-Zinn, 1990), Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT; Segal et al., 2002, 2013) and Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention (MBRP; Bowen et al., 2011), but has been tailored to the unique aspects of people experiencing problems with gambling.

Clinicians working in addiction treatment programs have noted that their clients can benefit from exercise and relaxation techniques. Mindfulness meditation goes beyond relaxation by teaching clients how to be present in a non-judgmental way. Practitioners instruct them how to step out of the usual habits of the busy mind, to observe and to be with their experience in any given moment.

Segal and colleagues (2002, 2013) refer to this state of being present as “being mind” as opposed to the “doing mind” that we are in most of the time. Although this doing or logical mind helps us get things done and problem solve, it prevents us from simply “being” in the moment and using the creative part of the mind. The moment when we behold a beautiful sunset, become awestruck and have no words or thoughts, we might be in the “being” mode of mind. However, this may only last a split second and then we return to the “doing” mind, conceptualizing the sunset and returning to our thoughts.

The aim of a mindfulness approach is for clients to become aware of and accept, without judgment, their present moment experience and to learn to see thoughts and emotions as passing mental events. The goal is not to change anything about one's experience, but, as defined by Jon Kabat-Zinn (1990), to pay “attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally” (as cited in Bowen et al., 2011, p. 46). In mindfulness practice, the client is encouraged to cultivate an attitude of curiosity, openness, friendliness, non-judgmental awareness and acceptance of one's present moment experience.

Structure of this manual

This manual is intended for an eight-session mindfulness group and is aimed at people experiencing problems with gambling who want to improve their relapse prevention skills. The manual includes lesson plans for the eight sessions for facilitators and handouts for clients.

CHAPTER 1

An introduction to mindfulness with practical suggestions for the group facilitation.

CHAPTER 2

Research on mindfulness and problem gambling.

CHAPTER 3

Discusses running mindfulness groups with diverse populations.

CHAPTER 4

A brief introduction to mindfulness and trauma and its suitability with this population.

CHAPTERS 5 TO 12

Presents the eight lesson plans in the order we usually hold them. Each lesson plan is followed by the relevant handouts.

CHAPTER 13

Presents concluding remarks and resources.

APPENDIX 1

Provides a list of resources.

APPENDIX 2

Evaluation form.



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Mindfulness is essentially an awareness and acceptance of your own moment-to-moment experience, including thoughts, emotions and body sensations.



Chapter 1

An introduction to mindfulness

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Jon Kabat-Zinn defined mindfulness as “paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, while non-judgmentally” (1994, p. 4). Mindfulness is an awareness and acceptance of your own moment-to-moment experience, including thoughts, emotions and body sensations. This does not mean suppressing thoughts, emotions or body sensations. Rather, practicing mindfulness means being aware of these thoughts, emotions or body sensations, without judging them, and adopting a sense of detachment. While practicing a person becomes aware of the content of their thoughts, but does not identify with them or feel that they have to act on them; They can let their thoughts slide in and out of awareness. We know that we cannot will ourselves to stop thinking about something. In fact, the opposite happens: Trying not to think about something makes it more difficult to detach from the thought. Rather than trying to suppress unwanted thoughts, the mindful person brings awareness to those thoughts and lets them be. This process is one of the key principles taught in a mindfulness class.

When learning to focus and attune your attention in the present moment, it is possible to become aware and open to novel experiences and multiple perspectives and to develop a greater sense of compassion for self and others, leading to a state of acceptance (Langer, 1990). Essentially, mindfulness allows people to learn to have a more positive relationship with their emotions and thoughts.

ADAPTING MINDFULNESS-BASED APPROACHES TO PROBLEM GAMBLING

Literature on the relationship between mindfulness and problem gambling has been growing (see de Lisle et al., 2012; Shonin et al., 2013b). According to de Lisle and colleagues (2012), dispositional mindfulness and psychological distress are inversely correlated. This relationship may be mediated by numerous factors including emotional, cognitive and behavioural flexibility. Similarly, Lakey et al. (2007) also found a significant negative correlation between gambling problems and mindfulness amongst undergraduate students. For more information on research into mindfulness, see Chapter 2.

Relapse prevention from a cognitive-behavioural perspective involves helping clients develop greater awareness of individual triggers and urges to gamble. Mindfulness practise also helps clients become more aware of triggers and urges and develop a different relationship to their experience by adopting an attitude of curiosity and non-judgmental awareness.

According to Toneatto and colleagues (2007):

[d]istinguishing mental events from the responses to them provides a choice to the gambler regarding how best to respond, rather than react, to gambling related cognition. It is argued that improving gambler's mindfulness can help them overcome the erroneous beliefs and automatic behaviours associated with problem gambling. Learning to relate differently to gambling cognitions may be as important as, if not more important than, challenging the specific content of the thoughts (p. 94).

Through mindfulness meditation practise, clients become aware of their urges but do not feel compelled to act on them. The key is learning to recognize the impermanence of experiences and understand that urges are passing mental events that do not have to be acted upon or fought. This is particularly important for problem gambling because of gamblers' tendency to be in autopilot while gambling and to have erroneous beliefs or misconceptions about their chances of winning gambling games. The mindful approach to erroneous cognitions brings awareness to the automatic nature of these

Mindfulness means accepting the good and the bad in our lives and not clinging to what we want while pushing away what we don't want.

thoughts. Gamblers often do know that these thoughts are inaccurate in the excitement of gambling. We believe that mindfulness may be a means of breaking that cycle by helping clients become more aware of their thoughts, and thus less likely to go into autopilot.

MBRPPG GROUPS

MBRPPG groups are experiential in nature, as direct experience with mindfulness is the best way of learning this practise. Therefore group process of teaching mindfulness is different from other group teaching where theory and concepts are discussed before participants are given an opportunity to then practise the skill. By contrast, mindfulness groups usually start with a mindfulness practise such as the body scan, sitting meditation or mindful eating, and follow with a discussion—called the inquiry.

INQUIRY

Following every mindfulness practise, facilitators ask group members what they noticed during the practise. This enhances the learning of the practise itself and emphasizes the direct experience of the practise. Inquiry is different from other treatment group discussions that centre on the analysis and interpretation of events. Inquiry is about what is observed during the mindfulness practise, focusing on body sensations, thoughts and emotions in a curious and non-judgmental manner.

FACILITATORS

MBRPPG facilitators need to have expertise in problem gambling counselling, including cognitive-behavioural relapse prevention strategies. Most importantly, they should have specific training in leading mindfulness groups (such as MBSR or MBCT group facilitation training) and must have a personal mindfulness practise. Facilitators can only embody and model mindfulness if they cultivate their own mindfulness. Using the bicycle as an example, it is difficult to teach someone to ride a bicycle if you cannot ride a bicycle yourself.

RELAPSE PREVENTION

A characteristic of problem gambling is recurring relapse of the gambling behaviour. The purpose of the mindfulness group is to improve a client's chance of preventing further gambling by integrating mindfulness with relapse prevention strategies. In the group, clients learn skills to help them manage their urges and cravings to

gamble. They learn these skills in a group with other people who are also experiencing gambling problems. The group meets weekly for eight two-hour sessions to learn ways of dealing with the thoughts and feelings that are part of their urges and temptations to gamble. They also have opportunities to share their experiences with other group members and ask questions about the mindfulness practise.

PRACTISE IS THE KEY

Clients need to know that learning the skill of mindfulness takes effort and practise. This approach depends a lot on the client's willingness to do home practise between class meetings. Home practise involves tasks such as listening to the recorded meditations provided and bringing mindfulness to daily routine activities, such as eating, taking a shower, cooking, walking and brushing their teeth. Many barriers to practise will come up and be discussed in the group. However, the commitment to spending time on home practise is an essential part of the group.

Maintaining a regular practise over time is important. Similar to all skills, clients will only see results after repeated practise. Persistence in the face of gambling losses is a hallmark of a gambling problem, and this same attribute can help problem gamblers succeed in meditation.

Gambling habits can take years to develop (Breen, & Zimmerman, 2002; Turner, 2006) and so will these new habits, but they are possible to learn. Encourage your clients to keep up the practise by committing time and effort. Becoming more self-aware is not difficult, but it does take motivation and practise.

TURNING TOWARD RATHER THAN AVOIDING

The mindfulness practises that clients learn in the group and at home will enable them to be more fully aware and present in each moment of their lives. They will learn to turn toward and acknowledge the difficulties in their lives rather than away from them, as they may have done in the past. For many people with gambling problems, what motivates them to gamble is to escape or avoid reality, to dream about the big win or to zone out and not think of anything. But using gambling as an escape is problematic: Eventually gambling will be what they have to escape from. In contrast, mindfulness means accepting the good and the bad in our lives and not clinging to what we want while pushing away what we don't want. In the long run, a mindfulness approach is more effective and liberating than gambling could ever be. It is also free of the financial issues that result from problem gambling.

Being present, aware in one's life and able to “see” clearly are central to preventing further gambling problems and to making more skillful decisions that are grounded in the present. In the group sessions, clients will learn how to remain open to and face their difficulties. During this process they will be supported by the instructor and the other group members.

WHAT OTHERS HAVE LEARNED FROM THE GROUP

Participants provided the following comments on evaluation forms (Chen et al., 2014):

Now I can recognize what[s] happening internally and separate myself from what I'm thinking.

My brain is very busy but in this course, I learned how to stay on NOW, in this moment.

I have become more aware of the present moment. I have become more mindful and conscious about the present moment, learning to take things one step at a time.

Mindfulness/awareness of warning signs and triggers is my main tool to not returning to coping via gambling.

I had a bit of a crisis while I took this course and practising mindfulness and journaling got me through it.

[My] mental and physical health has improved greatly.

I have more patience and am aware of my heartbeat.

[I] learnt about taking your time on something without stressing yourself.

They claimed they learnt how to:

Calm down by using the three-minute breathing meditation.

Stop and think before I do any harm or damage to myself.

Discipline myself better.

Control [myself from] going into auto pilot.

Be a much better listener and not be affected by small things. Conflicts are less severe when you don't react right away.

Sometimes get rid of bad thinking and be relaxed.

Feel more positive.

Calm down—and be less anxious.

During the group, clients learn many different ways to be mindful. By trying all the mindfulness practises, they discover the approaches that are most useful for them. The weekly group also provides opportunities to practise being kinder and gentler to themselves.

Chapter 2

Mindfulness research

The following is a short discussion on mindfulness research. It provides some background into the nature of mindfulness and problem gambling, and the research connected to it.

ORIGIN AND PURPOSE

The concept of mindfulness, as it is known today, originated from Buddhist contemplative practises dating back over 2,500 years. Although the practise was born from a religious quest to achieve enlightenment, mindfulness has—in recent years—been increasingly integrated into various physical and mental health care programs. For example, it has been used to help clients deal with chronic pain (Gardner-Nix, 2009; Morone et al., 2008) and cope with cancer (Mackenzie et al., 2007). It has also been used to help clients with mental health problems, including depression (Segal, Williams, and Teasdale, 2013) and substance use problems (Bowen, Chawla and Marlatt, 2011).

Several studies report positive effects of mindfulness meditation. For example, Morone and colleagues (2008) report that meditation helped their clients relieve pain and improve attention, sleep and their sense of well-being. Similarly, Shonin et al. (2013a) report that participants with stress and low mood experienced improved psychological well-being from receiving meditation awareness training.

Toneatto, Vettese and Nguyen (2007) speculated that mindfulness could play an important role in problem gambling recovery. Several authors have subsequently conducted research on mindfulness and problem gambling.

The purpose of the current manual is to further this body of knowledge on mindfulness and gambling by offering a mindfulness-based approach, based on the mindfulness groups run for the past eight years at the Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario (PGIO) at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in Toronto.

OVERVIEW OF MINDFULNESS-BASED APPROACHES

One of the first addiction researchers to understand the potential for mindfulness was Alan Marlatt (1985). Marlatt recognized that the greatest challenge for those with substance use problems was not quitting, but staying sober. As a pioneer in relapse prevention (RP), Marlatt realized that meditation could act as a coping or relapse-prevention strategy for people at risk for relapse. Mindfulness could help them reduce stress and achieve balance in life, among other benefits.

According to Marlatt:

[O]ne of the most significant effects of regular meditation practise is the development of mindfulness—the capacity to observe the ongoing process of

experience without at the same time becoming 'attached' or identifying with the content of each thought, feeling, or image. Mindfulness is a particularly effective cognitive skill for the practise of RP. If clients can acquire this ability through the regular practise of meditation, they may be able to 'detach' themselves from the lure of urges, cravings, or cognitive rationalizations that may otherwise lead to a lapse (p. 319).

In the 1990s, Jon Kabat-Zinn (1990) pioneered the implementation of mindfulness in Western medicine through the development of his Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program. His focus was on treating patients at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center who had chronic pain and various other medical issues, including HIV and heart disease. His focus with mindfulness- or acceptance-based approaches is on an individual's relationship to thoughts and emotions.

The aim of the MBSR approach is for clients to become aware of and accept, without judgment, their present moment experience and to learn to see thoughts and emotions as passing mental events. The goal of the contemplative practise is not to change experience or thoughts, but simply to "pay attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (Jon Kabat-Zinn 1990 as cited in Bowen et al., 2011, p.46). Rather than trying to suppress the unwanted thoughts, the client is encouraged to cultivate an attitude of curiosity, openness, friendliness, non-judgmental awareness and acceptance of the present moment experience. We know that trying not to think about something often fails. Instead, mindfulness teachings encourage people to allow those thoughts into awareness, and rather than getting upset about them, to bring a gentle non-judgmental awareness to the thoughts, letting them be. These attitudes are emphasized through teaching and learning about such themes as non-judging, patience, beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance and letting be (Bowen et al., 2011).

Since the initial work of Kabat-Zinn and Marlatt, mindfulness-based approaches have been integrated into various other therapies and programs including Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) (Linehan, 1993), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) (Hayes et al., 1999), Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) (Segal et al., 2002; 2013) and Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention (MBRP) (Bowen et al., 2011). A core element of many of these programs (e.g., MBSR, MBCT, MBRP) is that they follow an eight-week group protocol that uses similar mindfulness meditation practises, such as the body scan, mindful eating, sitting meditation (i.e., mindfulness of the breath, body, sounds, thoughts and emotions), mindful walking and yoga.

CLINICAL EVALUATIONS OF MINDFULNESS-BASED RELAPSE PREVENTION

In recent years, mindfulness has been increasingly recognized as clinically effective. Baer (2003) conducted a review of the literature and found that mindfulness-based interventions were efficacious across various patient populations and disorders including chronic pain, depression, anxiety and stress reduction.

A recent meta-analysis by Goyal et al. (2014) reviewed 18,753 citations and identified 47 clinical trials involving 3,515 participants. When the studies were combined, they found that mindfulness meditation programs had moderate evidence of improved anxiety (effect size, 0.38 [95% CI, 0.12-0.64] at eight weeks and 0.22 [0.02-0.43] at three to six months), depression (0.30 [0.00-0.59] at eight weeks and 0.23 [0.05-0.42] at three to six months) and pain (0.33 [0.03-0.62]). These findings scientifically demonstrate that mindfulness can be a helpful therapeutic method. However, only 47 of the 18,753 citations were set up in a way that made meta-analysis possible. Goyal et al. (2014) noted a need for stronger and more consistent study designs to determine the effects of meditation programs in improving the positive dimensions of mental health and stress-related behaviour. Another study by Kuyken et al. (2015) reported that MBCT was as effective and as cost effective as antidepressants in preventing relapse.

RELATION OF PROBLEM GAMBLING TO MINDFULNESS-BASED APPROACHES

Cognitive factors, such as erroneous beliefs about random chance, play a role in a gambler's difficulty in controlling the impulse to engage in repeated, persistent gambling (Petry, 2005; Toneatto, 1999). For example, many problem gambling behaviours (e.g., chasing, incremental betting) are linked to erroneous beliefs about the concept of randomness (Kahneman & Tversky, 1982; Toneatto et al., 1997; Turner, 1998; Turner et al., 2006). For example, chasing (or continuing to gamble to gain back losses) is ineffective because of a false belief that gamblers' chances of winning increase with repeated gambling (Turner, 1998). Yet even if people are taught about the concept of independence of random events, the act of gambling itself can overpower what they have learned (Benhsain et al., 2004; Sevigny & Ladouceur, 2003). Furthermore, people with gambling problems often report going into a trance-like state while gambling. Some even report totally disassociating from their physical body, as if they are passive observers while their body gambles away their money. These reports suggest that problem gambling often involves automatic thoughts that take place outside of awareness (Gupta & Derevensky, 1998; Jacobs, 1988). These observations suggest that gamblers might benefit from greater awareness of their present moment experience so they can avoid slipping into autopilot and being overwhelmed by their thoughts. Many attempts have been made to help gamblers by teaching them a greater understanding of probability (Ariyabuddhipongs, 2013), but a key problem is that when they gamble, they operate on autopilot. According to Toneatto et al., (2007):

[d]istinguishing mental events from the responses to them provides a choice to the gambler regarding how best to respond, rather than react, to gambling related cognition. It is argued that improving gambler's mindfulness can help them overcome the erroneous beliefs and automatic behaviours associated with problem gambling. Learning to relate differently to gambling cognitions may be as important as, if not more important than, challenging the specific content of the thoughts (p. 94).

A mindful approach to erroneous cognitions brings awareness to those thoughts and, in particular, the automatic nature of those thoughts. By bringing awareness

to their thoughts, they can recognize them as just thoughts and not act on them. As noted, gamblers often do know that these thoughts are inaccurate, but in the excitement of gambling, they go into autopilot. We believe that mindfulness may be a means of breaking out of that cycle by helping the client avoid autopilot. If people learned how to cultivate non-judgmental awareness of their thoughts and emotions by practising mindfulness, they may be able to overcome the urges and cravings that often drive people to gamble or relapse to gambling. Learning to be mindful can prevent the kind of autopilot that gamblers often report. One technique described by Bowen et al. (2011) uses an “urge surfing” analogy to help clients cope with the intensity of their cravings. Riding the wave of craving (e.g., the urge to gamble) is like riding on a surfboard without being submerged by the intensity of the wave. The gambler accepts the idea that the urge will happen, but through this meditation exercise, learns not to be ruled by these urges. The key learning here involves recognizing the impermanence of all experience and understanding that urges are passing mental events that do not have to be acted on or fought. One simply accepts the urge as thoughts, feelings, body sensations—nothing more—and lets them slide in and out of awareness.

COGNITIVE RESEARCH ON MINDFULNESS

Previous research on mindfulness suggests that brief mindfulness meditation can help improve attention, problem solving and working memory in students (Leverty, 2012). In addition to its clinical utility, mindfulness has been shown to improve cognitive functioning, including orientation and alerting attention (Jha et al., 2007). A study by Zeidan et al. (2010) found that just four sessions of mindfulness for 20 minutes a day improved executive functioning, working memory and visuo-spatial processing. In addition, research on mindfulness meditation demonstrates a positive relationship between the benefits one receives and the amount of daily practise one engages in (Carmody & Baer, 2008). Leverty (2012) examined the effects of brief mindfulness on cognitive test performance, but did not find any evidence of an effect.

Moore et al. (2012) studied how regular, brief mindfulness meditation practise improved electrophysiological markers of attentional control. They used a longitudinal randomized control group and an EEG to study the brain. The results suggest that mindfulness meditation may alter the efficiency of allocating cognitive resources, leading to improved self-regulation of attention. Lykins (2009) examined the effects of mindfulness and meditation experience on cognitive and emotional functioning. Ninety-eight individuals (33 meditators, 33 age-matched non-meditating controls and 32 students) completed self-reports and behavioural measures of attention, learning, memory, cognitive and emotional biases and self-regulation. Results demonstrated that meditation practise related to few of the measured constructs, but there were significant group differences detected between the meditators and non-meditators in short-term memory, long-term memory and self-regulation. Self-reported mindfulness in the non-meditators was related to self-reported psychological well-being. Together these studies suggest that mindfulness alters attention and has a real effect on cognition, but more research is needed to draw strong conclusions about its benefits.

Gamblers often report playing in a dissociative state trance-like state while gambling as if on auto pilot (Dixon et al., 2019; Gupta & Derevensky, 1998; Jacobs, 1988; Murch et al., 2020;

Schüll, 2012). Dixon et al. (2019), found evidence that people with mindfulness problems in everyday life fixate their attention on slot machines, thereby inducing dark flow. This in turn results in a feeling of positive affect which perpetuates addictive tendencies. We view mindfulness as a means of interrupting this dissociative state by de-automatizing the experience. As evidence for this, McKeith, Rock, and Clark, (2017) report a negative association between trait mindfulness and cue-reactive urge to gamble in a population of poker-machine gamblers. Mishra et al., (2019) report evidence that mindfulness and self-efficacy are important modifiable protective factors than clients can learn. It is argued that improving gambler's mindfulness can help them overcome the erroneous beliefs and automatic behaviours associated with problem gambling (Toneatto, Vettese, and Nguyen, 2007).

RESEARCH ON MINDFULNESS AND GAMBLING PROBLEMS

In recent years, literature on the relationship between mindfulness and problem gambling has been growing (de Lisle et al., 2012; Shonin et al., 2013b). According to de Lisle et al. (2012), an inverse relationship exists between dispositional mindfulness and psychological distress. This relationship may be mediated by various factors, including emotional, cognitive and behavioural flexibility. That is, people who are more mindful may feel less psychological distress.

A study by Lakey et al. (2007) reports a significant negative correlation between gambling problems and mindfulness amongst undergraduate students. In a second study, Lakey and colleagues (2007) reported that mindfulness was related to better performance on two risk-related judgment and decision-making tasks. Thus, improving a client's mindfulness may improve decision-making.

Lakey and colleagues (2007) speculate that “greater attention to and awareness of ongoing internal and external stimuli that characterizes mindfulness may represent an effective means of mitigating the impulsive and addictive responses and intemperate risk-attitudes of individuals with PG” (p. 1708). A few studies have examined how mindfulness works to mitigate problem gambling. In a study by de Lisle et al. (2011) (as reported in de Lisle et al., 2012), the authors found that problem gamblers had lower levels of dispositional mindfulness than the normative samples of adult community members and university students, and “that dispositional mindfulness was negatively related to gambling urges, gambling pre-occupation, problem gambling severity, gambling expenditure, and gambling frequency” (de Lisle et al., 2012, p. 721).

A study by Riley (2012) reported that while thought suppression was positively related to problem gambling, mindfulness was negatively related to problem gambling. A big question is how mindfulness works. In an attempt to answer this, de Lisle et al. (2012) reviewed the evidence for a number of different mechanisms that may be involved in mindfulness, including issues such as a myopic focus on reward, psychological distress, rumination, thought suppression and improving emotional, cognitive and behavioural flexibility. They also discuss numerous theoretical models of how mindfulness may be related to problem gambling. They concluded that the relationship between “mindfulness and problem gambling behaviour is likely to be very complex” (de Lisle et al. 2012, p. 731) because mindfulness is itself a complex construct.

A small number of studies have evaluated the clinical application of mindfulness for problem gambling (Chen, et al., 2014; Maynard et al., 2018; van der Tempel, et al., 2020). The two case studies published on the use of mindfulness (see de Lisle et al., 2012) found it to be successful in helping the client toward recovery. Two other research studies have examined the efficacy of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), which includes mindfulness as a component of the treatment. The first study was by Korman et al. (2008) and used a DBT model to provide an integrated treatment for problem gambling, anger and substance abuse. They found that the integrated treatment model reduced substance use, but no measure of specific mindfulness skills were reported. Their results were promising, but it is not clear if the effectiveness of the program was due to mindfulness or more generally to the integrated nature of the treatment, which included problem gambling, anger management and substance use treatment. Christensen et al. (2013) recently evaluated a modified DBT approach with treatment-resistant problem gamblers. They found that participants' mindfulness improved significantly from pre- to post-test. In their study, 14 treatment-resistant problem gamblers had measured changes in mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion dysregulation and negative relationships after nine weeks of DBT. Although there were no statistically significant improvements in measures of gambling behaviour, 83 per cent of participants were abstinent or reduced their gambling expenditure pre- to post-treatment. Participants also reported statistically and clinically significant improvements in psychological distress, mindfulness and distress tolerance. There were no increases in alcohol or substance use, indicating that the clients were not substituting a second addiction.

A study by McIntosh, Crino, and O'Neill, (2016) also found that mindfulness was an effective treatment of problem gambling. Chen et al. (2014) demonstrated that individuals who have participated in a mindfulness intervention for problem gambling reported improved control over gambling, greater task-specific attention and reduced automatic thought patterns. In a review of the literature, Maynard et al., (2018) found that the results are largely positive but limited by the number and quality of eligible studies, and differing conceptualizations of mindfulness.

DEVELOPMENT OF THIS MANUAL

This manual is based on our experience teaching mindfulness to PGIO (now called Problem Gambling and Technology Use Service at CAMH) groups since 2010. The data described in this manual were used to evaluate part of the regular treatment program and not collected as a research project. A separate non-controlled study by Chen et al. (2014) assessed the extent to which the participants reported greater mindfulness over the course of the therapy. Chen et al. (2014) evaluated an eight-week mindfulness group program with 17 PGIO clients (88 per cent male) at CAMH using questionnaires that were distributed at the first group session and at the final group session. The evaluation was a mixed method design that included both qualitative and quantitative feedback about the group. All of the participants showed improved mindfulness after the eight-week treatment program. Their mindfulness was measured using the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), which has 15 items designed to assess core characteristics of dispositional mindfulness, or open or receptive awareness and attention to what is taking place in the present. The scale has strong psychometric properties and has been validated with college, community and cancer patient samples. Correlational, quasi-experimental and laboratory studies have

shown that the MAAS measures a unique quality of consciousness that is related to, and predictive of, various self-regulation and well-being constructs (see Brown & Ryan, 2003). After the eight-week program, the MAAS scores increased from a pre-test score of 3.65 (SD = 1.01) to a post-test score of 4.40 (SD = 0.78). Qualitative feedback about the group also highlighted a number of improvements in the clients' lives, including being more in control, feeling more relaxed and being better able to stay in the present. The results indicated that mindfulness was successfully taught during the eight-week group program.

SUMMARY

In summary, there exists a body of research in many health care domains—including pain management, cancer, stress reduction and depression—indicating that mindfulness is useful. We believe that mindfulness can also be applied to problem gambling clients. Applying mindfulness to problem gambling is particularly relevant because of the large role that erroneous beliefs (e.g., Toneatto et al., 1997; Turner et al., 2006) and automatic thinking play in problem gambling (e.g., Benhsain et al., 2004; Gupta & Derevensky, 1998; Jacobs, 1988). This makes improving the client's awareness and avoiding going into autopilot particularly relevant. We believe that becoming aware of these automatic thoughts should improve the individuals abilities to resist their urges to gamble. The results of Chen et al.'s (2014) study, using scores from both the MAAS scale and qualitative feedback responses, indicate that our treatment program was successful at teaching people with gambling problems how to engage in mindful awareness practise. Further study is needed to determine how effective this program is in improving the outcome for treatment and reducing relapse compared to other programs. As well, Shonin et al. (2013b) note that other aspects of Buddhist-derived interventions may also be of benefit to people with addictions: these techniques may open up other potential avenues for research and treatment for the problem gambler.

**Mindfulness is
an opportunity to
help people become
fully aware of and
engage with their
emotions, regardless
of their cultural or
ethnic background.**



Chapter 3

Mindfulness and diverse populations

This section discusses the use of mindfulness as a tool for working with people from diverse groups and its relationship to gambling.

Scientific evidence demonstrates that mindfulness-based interventions are beneficial for numerous physical and mental health concerns, including but not limited to cancer, chronic pain, eating disorders, stress reduction, depression, anxiety and trauma (Amaro et al., 2014; Dimidjian et al., 2014; Karyadi et al., 2014; Liehr & Diaz, 2010). Mindfulness treatments have been effective for specialized and marginalized populations, including women with substance use disorders, youth, ethnoracial populations, women with perinatal depression, women who are traumatized, gamblers and older adults (Amaro et al., 2014; Chen et al. 2014; Dimidjian et al., 2014; Gallego et al., 2013).

People from underserved and underrepresented backgrounds often encounter challenges that can be addressed in a mindfulness practise. For example, people

from marginalized racial groups, people with low socioeconomic status and those with disabilities may encounter numerous systemic barriers that can limit their opportunities for employment, heighten stressors and impact oppression (Sobczak & West, 2013). Mindfulness strategies offer an opportunity to identify some of the emotions associated with the different forms of oppression and the resulting life struggles.

While the benefits of mindfulness in a person's life over the long term are predominantly positive, some people may struggle with incorporating mindfulness practises into their lives. Stress related to racism may affect how people perceive the practises (Amaro, 2014). For example, they may have suppressed difficult emotions in order to address things like employment, education, health care and housing. But then—when doing mindfulness—these suppressed emotions surface and the anger and frustration they feel may make it harder to deal with these oppressive systems. For example, a racialized woman may have found avoiding her emotions to have been a protective factor or a way of coping with discrimination around employment and housing. Having experienced numerous instances of racism in early life, she may have started gambling as an outlet for dealing with emotions, without being aware of her gambling-related triggers. Despite her resilience in maintaining steady employment and raising healthy and successful children, her gambling may have increased to a point that is no longer healthy. This woman might now label herself as a gambler and feel a sense of guilt and regret for her gambling. Such feelings can lead to a sense of powerlessness.

Gambling treatment can raise many emotions and challenges around health, finances, employment and relationships. Numerous other external or internal stresses may also coexist. Mindfulness is an opportunity to help people become fully aware of and engage with their emotions, regardless of their cultural or ethnic background. Through mindful practise, people can identify values that are important to them and become aware of how to live a more meaningful life. Encouraging clients to “sit and be silent” with their feelings can be overwhelming, challenging or viewed as a silly exercise but people ultimately benefit from cultivating a greater awareness of their inner reality. Acknowledging that they may also be experiencing numerous barriers and challenges in the process may be helpful in tolerating the difficult emotions that may arise.

When introducing mindfulness to gambling clients, the clinician should explain how avoiding distressing emotions may be related to their gambling-related feelings and behaviours. The clinician should also acknowledge the emotional pain and discomfort that may emerge when painful emotions arise in the mindfulness process (Sobczak & West, 2013). By validating clients' experiences and encouraging them to continue with mindfulness, they may feel more comfortable allowing their emotions to surface and gradually learn to accept past challenges and live in the present. This process can



help lead clients to greater self-compassion and self-regulation, as well as help them reach an awareness that they are not alone in their suffering (Chen et al., 2014).

A mindfulness-based approach offers the potential for clients to be in touch with emotions and grapple with what is important in living a valued, meaningful and purposeful life. They are given the opportunity to get in touch with their gambling-related triggers and to think about their relationships, both to people and to money, and their values, specifically how they wish to live lives when gambling is no longer central. An important step in this process is identifying their values at this point in life (Sobczak & West, 2013). For instance, a client who has been gambling for the last five years and is now coming to terms with the financial losses and debts may experience great guilt, anger, anxiety and frustration with their prior gambling behaviours. Rather than these emotions being triggers to further gambling, mindfulness can promote the acceptance of challenges in the face of adversity (Sobczak & West, 2013).

Aspects of mindfulness modalities can be practised at any time, making this approach empowering for clients, particularly for those who may have felt powerless in their lives. As clients attend to their own emotions and sensations, they can reconnect to what is valuable and meaningful in their lives. A challenge that may arise in presenting mindfulness as a treatment option is clients' concern that the practise is religious or tied to faith. Given the origin of mindfulness in Buddhism, some people may feel it clashes with their own beliefs. To address this concern, clinicians could provide psychoeducation about mindfulness as a therapeutic tool and its efficacy regardless of spirituality (Sobczak & West, 2013). If the client already has a religious or spiritual practise, they may be able to integrate aspects of mindfulness into their current practises. With clients, the clinician could also explore strategies that they have implemented in the past to overcome challenging situations and the extent to which they found these strategies helpful (Sobczak & West, 2013).

Mindfulness can be offered as one of several strategies that clients may find valuable. In fact, most religious traditions contain a contemplative practise for cultivating stillness and presence (University of Oslo, 2014), similar to mindfulness. Prayer, for example, can be viewed as a type of meditation. With an emphasis on technique rather than content, people can obtain a deeper understanding of themselves and learn to live in the moment using meditation, without accepting any Buddhist or religious ideas.

According to Dr. Eifring (2014) at the University of Oslo, “meditation has been performed for several thousand years, and appears in all the major religions”

and in “numerous forms far more than we are familiar with today. It is also an integral part of ritual trances used in shamanistic cultures (Basilov, 1990).

A major difference between Western and Asiatic meditation is that in the West, meditation focuses on the individual's relationship with God(s) and includes prayer

and the contemplation of specific religious passages. In the Asian tradition, meditation is more about the techniques (e.g., breathing, yoga stretches) than about content. Since the 1950s, Western meditation has become less about the content and more about the technique (University of Oslo, 2014).

Irrespective of ethnic or cultural backgrounds, mindfulness does not impose any particular belief or approach on the practitioner. Mindfulness is simply about learning to get in touch with your inner world, cultivating greater self-awareness and insight and learning to be present in a curious and non-judgmental manner. People can learn to become aware of their triggers to gambling and learn tools for processing and sitting with those reactions. Mindfulness is synonymous with embodied self-reflection, and emotions are at the root of self-reflection. By learning to become aware of emotions and physical attributes associated with behaviour, mindfulness teaches skills for compassion toward self and others.

Those who diligently practise mindfulness, regardless of their specific backgrounds, learn to identify themselves as more than a label and to become aware and accept their personalized issues of diversity and addiction. This occurs through detachment but not dissociation from their experience. Instead, this is developed through non-judgmental awareness. In fact, this is the opposite of dissociation. Dissociation is a loss of awareness, going into a dream world to escape it, while meditation is an increased awareness that helps us relax, accept and be non-reactive and non-judgmental so that we don't need to escape.

Because it is a skill-based treatment intervention, mindfulness can help people of all different ethnic and cultural backgrounds who experience gambling problems learn how to become aware of and observe their physiological and emotional experiences.

Self-acceptance of identity, values and sense of meaning can lend to a fuller understanding and appreciation of how experience and perspective impacts emotions and behaviours. This can be an empowering experience for anyone. A client honouring and accepting their own experiences translates into a greater sense of awareness towards others and offers the opportunity for healthy self-development.

**Mindfulness
can help trauma
survivors address
the symptoms of
PTSD: avoidance,
hyperarousal,
re-experiencing,
and negative
cognitions.**



Chapter 4

Mindfulness and trauma

WHY MINDFULNESS AND TRAUMA?

There is increasing evidence that mind-body oriented approaches such as mindfulness can offer trauma survivors ways to cope with the effects of trauma and live a fulfilling and meaningful life. (Follette et al., 2015).

The integration of mindfulness and cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) has been shown to be effective to prevent or reduce various symptoms or problems associated with trauma such as anxiety, panic, depression, substance use problems, eating disorders, suicidality, self-injurious behaviour, dissociation, low self-esteem and chronic pain.

PREVALENCE OF TRAUMA IN PROBLEM GAMBLING TREATMENT POPULATION

Problem gambling treatment programs have a high incidence of client trauma histories, not unlike substance abuse programs. Gambling, like substance use problems, can serve as a means of escape from the symptoms of trauma or posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is therefore important that gambling counsellors have an understanding of how to work with and support clients affected by trauma and how to incorporate mindfulness into their practise.

CLINICAL BENEFITS

Research and clinical experience shows that mindfulness is a well-accepted and effective approach for dealing with the effects of trauma (Magyari, 2015), despite the clinical challenges of teaching it to clients.

Among the skills mindfulness offers clients, it helps clients to stay present with their experiences, regardless of whether these experiences are good or bad (Jindani & Singh, 2015). Mindfulness can help trauma survivors address PTSD symptoms, such as avoidance, hyperarousal, re-experiencing and negative cognitions, especially when practised concurrently with trauma-focused psychotherapy.

For example, learning to be aware of mind and body, to be present and to not react to intrusive memories and triggers can help trauma survivors stay present in the moment (Jindani et al., 2015). Similarly, with avoidance symptoms, trauma survivors can learn through mindfulness to turn toward what they are experiencing with curiosity and non-judgment. For symptoms of hyperarousal, mindfulness practises have a calming effect on the nervous system, so trauma survivors can become less aroused (Magyari, 2015) and more aware of their surroundings, promoting a sense of safety (Jindani et al., 2015).

Trauma survivors can also learn to avoid the downward spiral of depressive rumination by not reacting to negative mood and cognitions, instead seeing thoughts and emotions as passing mental events (Magyari, 2015; Segal et al., 2002). This can help to teach them to develop a different relationship to their experiences.

They can also learn to respond to self-critical thoughts with greater kindness and self-compassion, as will be discussed in the section below on self-compassion (Germer & Neff, 2015; Kearney et al., 2013).

Learning to be aware of mind and body, to be present and to not react to intrusive memories and triggers can help trauma survivors stay present in the moment.

USING MINDFULNESS IN TRAUMA THERAPY

Mindfulness-augmented trauma therapy refers to therapy for trauma survivors where mindfulness has been integrated into the therapy program (Briere, 2015; Vujanovic et al., 2016). John Briere (2015) suggests to keep the following in mind when considering introducing trauma survivors to a mindfulness-based approach:

- Trauma survivors may have difficulty with mindfulness meditation if they are experiencing intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, rumination or easily triggered trauma memories.
- Mindfulness meditation is about being fully present with what is, thus decreasing avoidance and providing greater exposure to unpleasant experience.
- Some trauma survivors may be lacking in affect regulation coping skills and thus be more easily overwhelmed when triggered.
- They may need some initial preparatory work in individual sessions prior to referring them to a mindfulness group. The purpose of this preparatory work is to gradually introduce the experience of mindfulness meditation and to stabilize the PTSD symptoms to the extent that they can comfortably participate in a group.
- Practicing mindfulness is about learning to be present with discomfort. Jon Kabat-Zinn defined mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally.”
- Psychosis, extreme depression, dissociative disorder, mania/hypomania, substance addiction, or suicidality may be other reasons for clients to avoid mindfulness meditation groups; at least until they experience some improvement in these symptoms or conditions.
- When available and appropriate, trauma survivors may be referred to a mindfulness group or a qualified meditation or yoga centre. If available, specialized trauma-focused mindfulness groups may be especially useful (Jindani & Khalsa, 2015).

INTEGRATING MINDFULNESS AND WESTERN APPROACHES

In both mindfulness and Western approaches, increased awareness can help people be less overwhelmed by their feelings and have greater insight into their subjective reactions. There is one major difference, however. Western interventions rely on diagnosing and treating a psychological disorder, while Buddhist approaches focus on developing awareness, insight, acceptance and a clear insight into reality. The aim of a Buddhist approach is to develop new understandings, capacities and skills, rather than labelling the pathology and fixing the problem.

INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOTHERAPY AND MINDFULNESS GROUPS

Although teaching trauma survivors mindfulness can be beneficial clinically, individual psychotherapy is a crucial adjunct to a mindfulness practise (Briere, 2015). The two are very different: Mindfulness is a skill usually taught in a group setting, while individual psychotherapy is about developing a safe and trusting relationship with a therapist in a way that cannot be replicated in a group setting (Briere, 2015).

WORKING WITH CLIENTS INDIVIDUALLY

Tara Brach (2015; see also Herman, 1998) outlined a three stage process of healing for trauma survivors to go through. For healing to occur, they need to reconnect with the painful emotions associated with the past trauma, but from a more detached or “spacious perspective.” Trauma survivors can only do this once they have established an environment of sufficient safety, care and connection with a trusted therapist, while also strengthening their own inner resources.

STAGE 1

The first stage involves developing a trusting relationship with a therapist as trauma survivor’s relationships may have historically been associated with danger. The therapeutic alliance with a trusted therapist can be more important than any therapeutic “techniques,” a fact supported by the outcome literature (Lambert & Barley, 2001; Lambert & Okishi, 1997). Trauma survivors can also learn that such healthy relationships are possible and this trusting relationship will place them in a better position to work through the intense fear that they can sometimes experience.

STAGE 2

The second stage is (Brach, 2015; Herman, 1998) for trauma survivors to deal with the tremendous self-blame, self-hatred and lack of self-compassion that they often experience (Germer & Neff, 2015). Understanding that addictions, dissociation, and avoiding intimacy were their solutions/adaptive strategies and that they were doing the best they could become part of their healing process.

STAGE 3

The third stage is (Brach, 2015; Herman, 1998) for trauma survivors to develop a sense of self-acceptance, safety, self-worth, or self-love for healing to occur. This can occur as a result of the therapist acting as a bridge from the trusting relationship with the therapist to a trusting relationship with themselves. The therapist, through the therapeutic alliance, helps the client through a process whereby they eventually learn to trust their own selves (Brach, 2015).

Modern technology has shown what happens in the brains of meditators when attention is focused on love. The left frontal cortex, the part of the brain that gets deactivated during trauma, lights up during loving kindness and compassion meditations (Brach, 2015; Salzberg, 1995; Wilson, 2016). The more that people practise loving kindness meditations, the more these positive emotions take hold (Brach, 2015; Jindani & Khalsa, 2015; Salzberg, 1995). The intensity of the trauma symptoms diminish while new associations, new inner resources and new ways of coping and understanding begin to emerge (Brach, 2015).

Loving kindness meditations can be done using internally generated words, images or self-touch. Someone can visualize being held by a loved one or apply gentle self-touch; for example, by tenderly stroking your face or hugging yourself. Or they can say to themselves something loving such as, “I love and accept myself just the way I am” and “May I be safe. May I be happy. May I be healthy. May I live with ease.” Trauma survivors can also identify an ally, mentor or supportive and trusting person to call to mind whenever in distress (Brach, 2015; Salzberg, 1995).

WORKING WITH CLIENTS THROUGH A GROUP MINDFULNESS-BASED STRESS REDUCTION (MBSR) PROGRAM

Teaching mindfulness has usually been done in a group setting. Many of the mindfulness groups that have evolved today have been based on the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn and the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program that he developed over three decades ago at the stress reduction clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

The MBSR program consists of an eight-week group, that meets once per week for about two-and-a-half hours, plus a one-day retreat.

Mindfulness skills are taught through various practises: Mindful eating; the body scan; mindful breathing; attention to body sensations, sounds, thoughts and emotions; mindful walking; mindful stretching; and yoga. Some principles or attitudes taught include cultivating presence, non-judgment, impermanence, acceptance, curiosity, beginner's mind; cultivating being mind versus doing mind; non-striving; and self-compassion (mindfulness, common humanity and self-kindness).

Clients who participated in the mindfulness groups at The Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario at CAMH (now called Problem Gambling and Technology Use Treatment Service) said they learnt:

About mindfulness and focusing on the present, thinking before you speak... patience, deep breathing in angst situations.

That the past is finished, the future is unknown and all we have is the present moment. Our thoughts are just that... thoughts. They will come and they will go.

To be more compassionate, [and to have] less or no judgment... [and to be] more and more relax[ed] as you go along with the home practise... being mindful gives me more peace, serenity and [makes it] easy to calm down in times of anxiety and panic attacks.

Mindful tools and skills that allow you to focus in the now and not worry about what you can't change.

How to put space in between my thoughts, cravings, urges. I learned that I have more control of my emotions, cravings and urges when I am present, not in auto pilot. A lot more aware of my feelings and body.

Three-part mindfulness—integrating an attitude of mindfulness throughout my daily activities—developing awareness—bodily, emotionally, spiritually, intellectually and environmentally helps me not to be reactive.

That being mindful and doing mindfulness takes practise. I am more aware than I was before. I learned to be more reflective.

[How to better understand] my feelings and reactions. Also to slow things down so I could take in more things.

To be mindful... aware of my surroundings... to breathe and control the breath.

To find my inner peace; that I can relax.

The value of mindfulness in everyday life (every moment life!) This course has positively changed my daily life. I am practising regularly and I think that my outlook is significantly brighter.

Taught me calmness—less rigidity. Techniques of mindfulness. Awareness of the moment. Awareness of my breath and body. Awareness of things around me.

REDUCING PTSD SYMPTOMS USING MINDFUL SELF-COMPASSION

Germer and Neff (2015) defined mindful self-compassion as consisting of three components: mindfulness, common humanity and self-kindness. The first component, mindfulness, involves bringing mindful awareness to your suffering. The second component, common humanity, involves recognizing that suffering is a part of the human experience and that you are not alone in your suffering. The third component, self-kindness, is about being kind to yourself rather than overly judgmental or critical. Many of us, especially trauma survivors, are hard on ourselves when experiencing suffering or pain. If a good friend is having a hard time, we treat them with compassion, but we often don't treat ourselves that way. Trauma survivors can benefit from learning to be more compassionate to themselves (Germer & Neff, 2015).

Trauma survivors can benefit greatly from learning self-compassion by working with an individual therapist and developing what Brach (2015) referred to as an “inner refuge.” See Stage 3 of the healing process on page 18, under “Working with clients individually.”

People with PTSD are often engaged in a pattern of reliving their prior trauma (Jindani et al., 2015). For example, people with PTSD may experience symptoms of arousal (in which they feel on the constant lookout for danger), avoidance (where they avoid certain symptoms that remind them of past trauma) and intrusions (in which memories of past traumatic events intrude into their thoughts). These symptoms prepare the body to respond to stress by a fight, flight or freeze response (Germer & Neff, 2015).

This in turn corresponds to our reactions to internal stress, including self-criticism, self-isolation and self-absorption (Brach, 2015; Germer & Neff 2015; Jindani et al., 2015). Self-compassion can be a healthy alternative way of responding to trauma. Self-kindness can have a soothing effect on the trauma survivor's aroused state. Common humanity takes them out of isolation and shame, and mindfulness helps them to detach from intrusive thoughts and feelings.

SELF-COMPASSION HAS BEEN LINKED TO MANY POSITIVE RESULTS

Research indicates that self-compassion is linked to many positive outcomes (Germer & Neff, 2015), including a sense of well-being; greater life satisfaction, happiness, self-confidence, optimism and motivation; healthy behaviours; personal accountability; coping and resilience; better romantic relationships; and more fulfilling other-focused concern. Self-compassion has also been linked to decreased anxiety, depression, stress, rumination, perfectionism, feelings of shame and negative body image. In addition, people who score high on self-compassion have been shown to also be less likely to develop PTSD (Germer & Neff, 2015).

Jindani et al. (2015) reported that mindful yoga, which makes us more aware and intimate with our bodies, results in significant improvements in measures of sleep, positive affect, perceived stress, anxiety, stress and resilience.

HOW TO DEVELOP MINDFUL SELF-COMPASSION

Research indicates that people participating in MBSR and MBCT programs score higher on self-compassion, even though these groups are not specifically focused on teaching self-compassion (Germer & Neff, 2015). Mindful Self-Compassion Training (www.CenterForMSC.Org) and Compassionate Mind Training (www.Compassionate-Mind.co.uk) are programs focused specifically on teaching mindful self-compassion.

Mindfulness is really about non-judgmental awareness and acceptance of your own moment-to-moment experiences, including thoughts, emotions and body sensations.



Chapter 5: Session 1

Lesson plan for stepping out of automatic pilot

We now turn to the actual lesson plans for running a mindfulness group with problem gamblers. People often act without being aware of what they are doing. Have you ever driven to work and encountered construction activity along your usual route to work? You then decide, in your mind, to take a different route the next day, only to find yourself on the same construction route before you catch yourself. This may even go on for another couple days before you can catch yourself and take a different route from the start.

How often do you meet someone and immediately after they tell you their name, you forget what their name is? Is this a problem with memory? What exactly is happening?

These are examples of operating on automatic pilot. Most of us live our lives operating on automatic pilot, not being fully aware of what it is we are doing from moment to



AGENDA

Introductions/
goals and
expectations
for group

Establishing
group norms
and safety

Experiential
nature of
group

Raisin
exercise
and inquiry

What is
mindfulness?

Body scan
meditation
and inquiry

Home
practise

Closing

moment. People with gambling problems often gamble on autopilot; we want to teach them how to break out of this.

In our first session, we discuss the concept of operating on automatic pilot. Automatic pilot is our tendency to act and react to what is happening around us without full awareness. Understanding autopilot is particularly important for people with gambling problems because they will often gamble away all of their money while on autopilot. We explore and discuss automatic pilot and relapse by considering how it is connected with triggers, cravings and urges to gamble.

Our exploration of mindfulness begins with the raisin exercise and the body scan, two experiential exercises that to fully bring attention to what is happening in the present moment—the first through mindful eating and the second through grounding the participants in their bodies. Our description of the raisin exercise is based on a number of sources, including Bowen et al. (2011), Segal et al. (2002) and Kabat-Zinn (1990) as well as our own experience using this exercise in group.

The raisin exercise is an introduction to mindfulness. It gets clients to practise a different way of being and doing things, mindfully and with presence. Mindfulness is about cultivating presence in your everyday life while maintaining a non-judgmental attitude of acceptance for whatever is happening.

INTRODUCTIONS, GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR GROUP

Ask participants to divide into pairs and take turns introducing themselves to their partners by stating their first names, what made them decide to attend this group and their hopes, expectations and goals for the group. When they have each taken turns with their partner, ask them to reconvene as a large group and invite each participant to introduce their partner to the group by listing their first name, reasons for attending and goals for the group. Keep a flip-chart of responses to the two questions for the group to see. The group leader can save the flip-charted list and bring it back to the group in session eight as a way of ending the group and of assessing whether or not their goals have been accomplished.

Group leaders can choose whether or not to give the participants name tags. But regardless of whether they use name tags, participants are encouraged to try and remember each other's names without relying on the tags. This is an opportunity for them to practise being present or mindful in the group and observe what happens when they encounter someone for the first time. It is not a test to remember names, but simply to notice what is happening rather than being on autopilot and failing to register each other's names.



Bringing awareness to the body helps to anchor us in the present moment, where thinking diminishes. Thoughts are usually focused on the past or future, while the body is always in the present.

ESTABLISHING GROUP NORMS AND SAFETY

Generate a discussion with group members about what will make for a safe and well-functioning group. The group leader can brainstorm with the group members what issues might arise and put participants' responses on a flipchart. Typical responses might include confidentiality, respect for differences and opinions, punctuality and regular attendance, honesty, a non-judgmental attitude and a commitment to the learning process.

EXPERIENTIAL NATURE OF GROUP

This is an experiential group centred around mindfulness practises: mindful eating, the body scan, sitting meditation, mindfulness of seeing, mindfulness of hearing, mindfulness of movement, mindful walking and the breathing space.

Teaching a new skill usually involves an initial discussion of the theory and concepts, followed by the practise of the skill. Mindfulness is taught in the reverse order: you practise the skill first and then have a discussion of the experience. The discussion of the experience is centred on the direct experience of the practise, called inquiry.

RAISIN EXERCISE AND INQUIRY

Operating on autopilot, as we do with so many routine activities in our day, is particularly an issue when people are gambling. But it is not so much the gambling itself that concerns us here; it is how automatic pilot behaviour can result in gambling. For example, someone may gamble on autopilot because of a hard day at work, a disagreement with a spouse or a feeling of boredom. The key is to break out of this pattern of reacting and instead respond from a place of centredness.

The raisin exercise is an introduction to mindfulness. It is about cultivating presence in your everyday life while maintaining a non-judgmental attitude. (Please refer to the meditation script for this exercise at the end of the lesson.)

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Now that the group has had an initial experience of a mindfulness practise as in the Raisin exercise, the group leader can brainstorm with the group “what comes to mind when they hear the word mindfulness?” Group responses can be recorded on a flipchart in an attempt to come up with a definition of mindfulness.

The group leader can then write the following definition on the flipchart: Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994, p. 4) defines mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally.”

Group leader can then highlight from the definition that mindfulness is not a relaxation or

stress management practise as some people often might think, although relaxation and stress reduction are often by-products of this practise. In addition, mindfulness is really about non-judgmental awareness and acceptance of your own moment-to-moment experiences, including thoughts, emotions and body sensations. This is an opportunity for the group to be clear on what they will be practising in the following weeks.

BODY SCAN MEDITATION AND INQUIRY

This meditation practise is an opportunity to shift attention away from thinking and mental events, and move it into the body.

A major part of the training is about paying attention to and being aware of your body. Bringing awareness to the body helps to anchor us in the present moment, where thinking diminishes. Thoughts are usually focused on the past or future, while the body is always in the present.

People often live in their heads, without much awareness of their bodies. Our bodies express sensations that can give us valuable information about feelings, emotions and mental events. When we are not aware of our bodies, we drive ourselves beyond limits, not realizing how our actions are affecting us until it is too late.

Mindfulness practises such as the raisin exercise and body scan provide an opportunity to develop the “being mind” rather than the “doing mind” (Segal et al., 2013). The doing mind refers to the part of our brain that tends to be more analytical and logical. It is the mind that we use to do our jobs and function every day. The being mind, on the other hand, relates to the part of the brain that we do not access very often—the mind that is creative and artistic. When we are accessing the being mind, very little thinking is happening: thoughts are diminished. For example, the instant that we encounter a beautiful sunset, there are no words and we become captivated by the experience, even just for a brief moment. But after a second or two, thinking returns and the experience is lost. We may start thinking about what time it is, where we are and what we need to do later. We start seeing the world again through the veil of concepts and pure awareness falls away.

The body scan involves moving attention to different parts of the body and is usually practised lying down, but can also be done sitting in a chair, depending on the size of the room or the person's preference. If the person is tired, then practising in a sitting position might make it easier to stay awake. If the person is in pain or has restrictions in movement, the person can adopt a comfortable posture on the floor, a cushion or a chair.

HOME PRACTISE

Distribute the handouts and meditation CDs. You can review the home practise with participants at the next session. Stress that it is important to do the home practise to get the most out of the group because with mindfulness, like any skill, the more you practise, the better at it you become. Doing a home practise will also help participants bridge the gap between the group and the rest of their life and make it more likely that they will continue practising mindfulness after the group has ended.

CLOSING

At the end, invite participants to describe what thoughts, feelings and body sensations they are noticing in the present moment. This type of closing is in the spirit of mindfulness because participants are observing their present moment experience as it is happening.

MEDITATION SCRIPTS FOR FACILITATOR

The facilitator can adapt the scripts spontaneously as they lead the practise.

Mindful eating practise: Raisin exercise

I'm going to place an object in each of your palms and provide you with instructions on what to do next with this object. Imagine that you are from another planet and have never seen this object before.

Observe the object as it rests on the palm of your hand. What does it feel like? How heavy is it? What do you notice about it? Gaze at this object with attention and curiosity. Allow your eyes to explore each part of this object in your hand and examine its qualities, texture and unique features. How would you describe these?

Turn over the object in your hand with your fingers. Notice the texture of the object in your hand. Notice what it feels like, for instance, with your eyes closed and then with your eyes open?

Pick up the object with your other hand and bring it to your ears, squishing it around with your fingers to notice any sounds. What do you hear?

When you are ready, bring the object just below your nose and notice the smells associated with this object, the fragrance. Also, notice if you feel any sensations in your mouth or in your tummy as you smell the object.

Now bring the object to your lips and notice what it feels like.

Slowly place it in your mouth and notice if there are any urges to bite into it, without acting on these urges. Do not chew it. Just place the object on your tongue and notice any sensations. Spend a few moments exploring the sensations that arise in your mouth as you allow your tongue to explore the object.

When you are ready, you can slowly begin to take a bite into the object. Slowly and with awareness, take a few more bites and notice the taste or any other sensations as you chew. Notice any impulse to swallow the object. Without swallowing, notice any textures and sensations in your mouth. You can now begin to slowly swallow. Notice as the object passes down your throat and into your belly.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS TO ASK

Do you feel one raisin heavier?

At what point does the raisin stop being a raisin and becomes part of you?

Inquiry following raisin exercise

What did you notice in doing this exercise?

What thoughts, feelings and body sensations did you observe while eating the raisin?

OTHER QUESTIONS TO ASK

Is this your typical experience of eating?

How do you usually eat?

What does this exercise have to do with addressing gambling-related problems?

Body scan mindfulness practise

Sit in a chair or lie on the floor, making yourself as comfortable as possible. Choose a comfortable posture you will be able to remain in for the next little while. Gently begin to close your eyes. When you are feeling comfortable, take a few moments to become aware of your breath and the sensations of your body.

Begin by bringing awareness to the physical sensations of your body, noticing the movement of your breath and the sensations in the body. Become aware of any sensations of touch or pressure, perhaps where your body makes contact with the floor or the chair. As you breathe out, allow yourself to let go of any stresses and sink a little deeper into the chair or the floor beneath you.

Your intention in this practise is not to achieve anything specifically, to feel different or to end the practise feeling relaxed or calm. While you may feel more relaxed after, the only thing we are attending to is noticing the sensations of the mind and body. Bring attention to any sensations you notice as you focus your attention on each part of the body.

Begin by bringing your attention to the sensations of the belly. Become aware of any sensations as you breathe in and as you breathe out. You may notice your belly rise and fall with each breath in and each breath out. Notice these sensations as they arise.

When you are ready, you will move your attention to your left foot. Focus on your big toe, your baby toe and all the toes in between. Bring an attitude of curiosity to the physical sensations as they arise. You may notice what your foot feels like resting on the floor beneath you if you are sitting or lying down. Perhaps you notice no particular sensation. You can begin to notice the sensations of the sole of your foot and your heel.

On the next outbreath, when you are ready, bring your attention to the rest of your foot, to the ankle and top of the foot. You may notice the sensations of your bones and joints. Just notice whatever it is that is arising for you at this time. If you find that your mind has wandered, just notice this and gently bring your attention back to observing the sensations in your foot and ankle.

On the next outbreath, shift the focus of your attention to the lower left leg, to your calf, shin, knee and kneecap and notice any sensations that arise. When you are ready, on the next outbreath, bring the same level of curiosity and openness to the physical sensations of the upper leg, perhaps noticing any sensations as your leg rests on the chair or the floor beneath you.

You will then move your attention to the right toes, to the big toe, the baby toe and all the toes in between. Notice any sensations as they arise. When you are ready, move your attention to the rest of the right leg, to the lower leg, the shin and knee, noticing any sensations present. Gently, and with awareness, bring your awareness to the upper right leg. Your only task is to notice any sensations as they arise in your right leg at this time.

In a similar fashion, gently and without judgment, bring attention to the abdomen, noticing the inhalation and exhalation; to the back, perhaps noticing how your back feels on the chair or the floor below; to your chest and lungs. Perhaps you notice your lungs expand and contract with each breath in and each breath out. When ready, move your attention to your fingers, noticing any sensations as they arise. Perhaps you notice some tingling, some warmth or whatever you notice for yourself. Just notice with curiosity and non-judgment. When you are ready, shift your attention to the wrists, forearms, elbows, upper arms and shoulders, becoming aware of any sensations present.

Now, bring your attention to your neck, face and top of the head and notice any sensations that may arise.

In the last few moments of this practise, take a few moments to scan the entirety of the body from bottom of the feet to the top of the head, noticing any final sensations as they rise.

Notice your breath, with each breath in and each breath out.

When you are ready, you can slowly and with awareness, open your eyes.

INQUIRY FOLLOWING BODY SCAN

What did you notice in doing this practise?

Invite participants to stay focused on the direct experience of doing the body scan in terms of thoughts, feelings or body sensations that they noticed.

The object of this practise is to just pay attention to various parts of the body without judgment. There are no right or wrong experiences. It is not unusual for people to fall asleep or find that thoughts or sounds distract the mind, for instance. When this happens, gently bring your attention back to the body.

OTHER QUESTIONS TO ASK FOLLOWING THE INQUIRY

Are you typically aware of your body in this way?

What does this have to do with dealing with problems with gambling?

Based on Bowen et al (2011), Segal et al. (2002) and Kabat-Zinn (1990).



Handout 1: Session 1

Stepping out of automatic pilot

People often do things but are unaware of what they are doing. Have you ever driven to work and encountered construction activity along your usual route to work? You then decide, in your mind, to take a different route the next day, only to find yourself on the same construction route the next day before you catch yourself. This may even go on for another couple days before you can catch yourself and take a different route from the start.

How often do you meet someone, and immediately after they tell you their name, you forget what their name is? Is this a problem with memory? What exactly is happening?

Most of us live our lives operating on automatic pilot, not being fully aware of what it is we are doing from moment-to-moment. How do we break out of this?

In our first session, we discuss the concept of “automatic pilot.” Automatic pilot is our tendency to act and react to what is happening around us, without full awareness. We explore and discuss automatic pilot and relapse by considering how it is connected with triggers, cravings and urges to gamble.

Our exploration of mindfulness begins with the experiential exercises of the raisin exercise and the body scan. In these exercises, we have the opportunity to fully bring our attention to what is happening in the present moment, through mindful eating in the raisin exercise and being grounded in our bodies in the body scan.

The raisin exercise is an introduction to mindfulness, which is a different way of being and doing things, mindfully and with presence. It is about cultivating presence in your everyday life while maintaining a non-judgmental attitude for acceptance for whatever is happening.

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

According to Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994), “mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”

Mindfulness is essentially an awareness and acceptance of your moment-to-moment experience; including thoughts, emotions and body sensations. It does not mean suppressing thoughts, emotions or body sensations. It is non-judgmental awareness and involves a sense of detachment from thoughts, emotions and body sensations. That is, you are aware of the content of your thoughts, but do not identify with them or feel that you have to act on them. You can let them slide in and out of awareness. You cannot will yourself to stop thinking about something. In fact the opposite happens; trying not to think about something makes it more difficult to detach from the thought. Rather than trying to suppress unwanted thoughts, the mindful person brings awareness to those thought and lets them be. This process is one of the key principles taught in a mindfulness class.

HOME PRACTISE

1 Body scan

For this first week, practise the body scan at least once a day for a minimum of five minutes.

2 Doing a daily activity mindfully

Choose an activity that you do on a daily basis (e.g., brushing your teeth, washing dishes, drinking tea, taking a shower, eating) and do it mindfully. For example, when taking a shower, notice the sensations of the water on your skin and the feeling of the soap's lather. Notice where your thoughts are. Are you thinking about what you will be doing next or is your awareness actually in the shower and on what is happening?

Whatever you are doing in the moment, just do that and nothing else.

When you are eating, just eat, without reading the newspaper or watching television, and notice the tastes and sensations of the food as you are chewing and swallowing.

Be fully present to whatever you are doing.

When in conversation with someone, let them be like the raisin and be open, curious and non-judgmental to the experience.



**Mindfulness is about
noticing whatever
is happening in the
present moment
with curiosity and
non-judgment.**



Chapter 6: Session 2

Lesson plan for developing awareness and coping with cravings and barriers to practise

This session focuses on observing our experiences without automatically reacting to them. This involves learning to attend to our triggers in the moment and bringing non-judgmental awareness to the body sensations, thoughts and feelings associated with the triggers. Mindfulness practises help develop this process of awareness because with practise, we can interrupt the automatic reactions that are typically associated with triggers. This allows us to make healthier, more skillful choices in the moment.

CHECK IN

Ask participants to say their first name and one thing they are noticing in the present moment; indicating thoughts, feelings or body sensations. As mentioned previously, this type of check in reflects the spirit of mindfulness practise, observing present moment experience as it unfolds without judgement.



AGENDA

Check in

Body scan

Home
practise
review and
common
barriers to
practise

Awareness
of our
interpretation
of events

Coping with
urges and
cravings in a
different way:
Urge surfing

Reconnecting
with our inner
steadfastness:
Mountain
meditation

Home
practise

Closing

BODY SCAN

Starting in this second session, the sessions will begin with a 20-to-30 minute meditation practise, in line with the experiential nature of this group. As discussed above, in mindfulness groups, we practise the skill first and then talk about the experience of the practise, called the inquiry. This is the reverse of the way skills are usually taught, by first discussing the theory and then practising the skill.

HOME PRACTISE REVIEW AND COMMON BARRIERS TO PRACTISE

Ask the group how the home practise went, both the formal and informal practises. The formal practise involved finding some time during the day to practise using the meditation tapes provided. The informal practise involved doing something that you would do routinely every day, such as taking a shower, eating, cooking, walking to the bus or driving with mindful awareness.

WERE THEY ABLE TO DO THE PRACTISE AND WHAT CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS GOT IN THE WAY?

If they were able to do the practise, what was their experience of doing so? What was helpful? Group leaders, if they choose, can share their own experiences of practising mindfulness and the barriers they faced. Speaking about their own challenges illustrates how mindfulness is an ongoing learning process.

If group members were not able to practise, what seemed to get in the way or what prevented them from doing so? The instructor should bring an attitude of non-judgmental curiosity to the inquiry.

BARRIERS TO MEDITATION ARE COMMON

Mindfulness meditation has been around for thousands of years and so have its barriers and challenges. These barriers are common to us all. Our lesson on barriers reaches back to ancient Buddhist ideas of hindrances and draws on the clinical experience of Segal, Williams and Teasdale (2002); Bowen, Chawla and Marlatt (2011); Kabat-Zinn (1990); Fronsdal (2016); our own research (Chen et al., 2014); and practical experience. It does not mean that you are doing it wrong. Refer back to how we define mindfulness meditation:

Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p. 4).

Mindfulness practises help with developing this process of awareness because, with practise, we can interrupt the automatic reactions that are typically associated with triggers.

As the definition demonstrates, being mindful is about noticing whatever is happening in the present moment with curiosity and non-judgment. It is not about doing it right, nor is it about getting rid of whatever is happening before being able to practise. We do not have to wait for conditions to be right before we can practise.

Barriers to meditation can originate from five main areas or habits of mind (which are discussed in more detail below). They affect how we experience life and can be obstacles to presence and happiness. They can weaken our wisdom and cause us to make decisions that are not good for us. They are always present, not just when trying to meditate. The object is to get to know them. They persuade us to do what is least beneficial. For example, when we are restless, we tend to want to do more, which creates more restlessness. They are not only barriers to meditation, but can also be barriers to what we want to do in life. They convince us that they are not barriers when they arise. They can colour and dull the mind. When these barriers are absent, the mind is clear and sharp.

The idea of the five hindrances goes back to ancient Buddhist philosophy. Bowen et al. (2011) calls them common challenges to meditation. Our discussion is based on various sources, including Bowen et al. (2011); Segal et al. (2002); and Fronsdal (2016).

The five habits of mind that become barriers to meditation are:

1 Desire/sensual pleasures

A desire for sensual pleasure has to do with craving, wanting, pulling toward something and not being content with the present moment (Bowen et al., 2011; Fronsdal, 2016). In essence, desire is about wanting something other than what is. People may not necessarily see desire as something that can cause a lot of damage when acted on, such as gambling. People may also desire one thing in order to push something else away. For example, someone may desire gambling in order to push away depression. When desire arises, focus on the consequences of acting on it and the impermanent nature of the desire. Being bored or wanting to do something else are examples of this barrier: We are not content with the way things are. This means that we are not accepting of the present moment and therefore not fully in the present moment (Bowen et al., 2011). For example, thinking about gambling or an urge to gamble can be an example of this barrier (Chen et al., 2015).

2 Aversion and ill-will

This has to do with not wanting or pushing away what is here. It can generate feelings such as irritation, anger and frustration (Fronsdal, 2016).

3 Sloth and torpor/ sluggishness and sleepiness

Practising mindfulness is about developing a mind that is both tranquil and alert (Fronsdal, 2016). Too much tranquility and no alertness leads to what is called “sinking mind.” Too much alertness without tranquility can lead to tension and anxiety. Sloth (i.e., laziness, sluggishness) and torpor (i.e., inactivity) refers to the physical and mental aspects, such as heaviness of body and dullness of mind, and includes drowsiness, sluggishness, low energy, sleepiness and lethargy. The mind can feel like mud or glue, making you feel lazy. Notice the pattern of thoughts that may precede this. Sloth and torpor can be a reaction to the constant habit of tension and anxiety. When we are finally able to sit still, we feel the exhaustion of this constant tension. You can counter this by the following suggestions: sit up straight, take a few deep breaths, count the breath, be curious about what is happening, remind yourself of why you are meditating, open your eyes, look at a light, change posture, get some fresh air, splash cold water on your face or do walking meditation instead of sitting or lying.

4 Restlessness, anxiety or worry

Sometimes putting too much effort into anything can result in agitation of mind (Fronsdal, 2016). Our mind can start racing and we can have trouble sitting still. As a result, we feel anxious. Because this agitation can be unpleasant, we tend to want to push it away, but this can only add to it, as resisting restlessness only increases it. Worry and anxiety arise out of fear of what will happen in the future. This results in restlessness of the body, wanting to shift posture and tightness and tension. It can also take the form of planning, self-judgment, regretting the past, nervousness and remorse. Regardless of what the source of the restlessness is, it is usually about the past or future rather than the present, which is where peace and happiness exist. People often think that mindfulness meditation is a relaxation practise but that is not the original intent. Mindfulness is about being present with what is. So, if you are feeling agitated, notice the feeling and be present with it, even if it is uncomfortable.

5 Doubt

Doubt serves to confuse us and make us indecisive, causing us to hold back and not fully apply ourselves or to give up. It creates feelings of uncertainty, which then creates more doubt. Doubt leaves you saying things like, “This is not for me” and “Others can do it, it hasn’t worked for me.” Other excuses include “There was too much discomfort,” “The conditions weren’t right” or “I kept getting distracted.” Thinking a lot can also cause doubt. We can doubt either our ability to practise or the teachings themselves, but this doubt is not productive or useful. Bring mindful attention to doubt whenever it arises, regardless of how strong the doubt is. If doubt is persistent, you can speak with a teacher you respect to make sure that you understand the instructions clearly. Also, you can suspend doubt until you have had a chance to test out the practise and see for yourself.

To have doubt about mindfulness, of the value and importance of just being mindful, borders on having doubt about the value of being present for life in general, because mindfulness and being present for life is the same thing. (Fronsdal, 2016, p. 7).

HOW TO ADDRESS THE HINDRANCES: THE RAIN FORMULA

Fronsdal (2016) uses the acronym RAIN (Recognize, Accept, Investigate and Non-identification) as an easy-to-remember guide to dealing with stress, anxiety and unwanted thoughts that act as barriers to meditation. RAIN was first introduced by Michele McDonald (Brach, 2016) and has been used by many Western mindfulness teachers since, including Tara Brach and Gil Fronsdal.

Regardless of the type of barrier, pay full attention to what is happening with non-judgment and curiosity (Fronsdal, 2016). The more you pay attention to something, the more it becomes interesting and fascinating. Have some belief that the practise works to overcome doubt. Don’t nourish the doubts. Know what they feel like.

Use the RAIN formula (Fronsdal, 2016) to help you deal with these hindrances:

R Recognize them when they are present as barriers. Which hindrance or combination of hindrances are they?

A Accept these sensations. Do not try to resist. Let them wash over you.

I Investigate and be curious about your doubts, your desires and your aversions. What are they like? How do these hindrances feel in the body? Are they pleasant? Unpleasant? Changing? How does this barrier make you feel emotionally? What is the energy level of these feelings? Do you feel like you are rushing, sinking, lifting? What are your thoughts, beliefs or stories about these feelings? Do you have an urge to act? What are you clinging to?

N d o Not identify with these feelings. They are just passing mental events and are impermanent. They do not define you. Let the sensations go.

OTHER EXCUSES

Other barriers to meditation can be a combination of these hindrances. They include having a racing mind, being too busy or falling asleep.

Racing mind

Having racing thoughts or not being able to stay still is a barrier that is a variation on the fourth hindrance, restlessness. As noted above, sometimes we are too alert. People often think that the purpose of mindfulness meditation is to clear the mind or to slow it down and when this does not happen, they think they are doing it wrong. But being aware that your mind is racing is in itself being mindful. However, you will find that with practise, your mind will slow down and relax.

Being too busy

According to Segal, Williams and Teasdale (2002), people are often just simply too busy or can't find the time to practise meditation because of hindrances such as doubt, restlessness or even desire. However, when people take the time to reflect with non-judgmental curiosity on how they spend their day, they might realize that there are times when they could have done some sort of practise, be it mindfulness of breath while waiting for a bus or staying focused on the now while driving (not going into autopilot). When people do make time to practise, they often realize that there is more opportunity than

they had ever anticipated. You can bring mindfulness to your daily activities, such as driving, walking the dog, feeding a baby, cooking and eating. Remember that formal mindfulness meditation is just a method for cultivating “presence” that is always right here and now, regardless of what you are doing. One of the most common ways to do this is by becoming aware of the breath in any given moment (Segal, Williams & Teasdale, 2002).

Falling asleep

Falling asleep is a variation of the third hindrance, sleepiness and sluggishness. As noted above, sometimes we have too much tranquility. There is nothing wrong with sleeping—we all need to sleep—but sleep is not the same as meditation. Mindfulness meditation is about “falling awake” rather than falling asleep (Kabat-Zinn, quoted in Moyers, 1993). It is not unusual for someone to fall asleep while meditating, particularly when they work long hours and get little sleep. We run around all day on automatic pilot, doing things that seem important to us. Ironically, most people have more leisure time today than ever before: we have shorter work days, weekends off, holidays and so many devices to make life easier such as cars, laundry machines, dishwashers, vacuums, microwaves, electronic ovens, blenders, food processors and coffee makers. But despite so much technological advancement to help us save time, people still feel stretched.

SUMMARY OF DEALING WITH HINDRANCES

All of the hindrances we have described are self-imposed barriers. Each moment is the “perfect moment” to practise. Regardless of what barrier is arising, encourage your group to pay full attention to what is happening with non-judgment and curiosity. The more you pay attention to something, the more it will become interesting and fascinating. Do not nourish the hindrances but know what they feel like. To help you address the hindrances, use the RAIN formula with your group (Fronsdal, 2016) so that when these barriers arise, they are able to notice them with curiosity and be aware, without judgment, of how they are reacting to them.

Not unlike the raisin exercise and the body scan, we can bring mindful awareness and a gentle, friendly, non-judgmental curiosity to any experience we are having—good, bad or indifferent—and learn to be open to it rather than push it away. By bringing non-judgmental awareness to whatever we are thinking, it may be easier to let the thought pass rather than dwelling on it. This can teach us to be more accepting of all experiences, including the ones that are challenging, such as urges and temptations to act out in problematic gambling. More information about dealing with barriers can be found in Segal, Williams & Teasdale (2002), Bowen et al. (2011), Kabat-Zinn (1990) and Fronsdal (2016).

AWARENESS OF OUR INTERPRETATION OF EVENTS EXERCISE

In this exercise, the intent is to recognize the power of thoughts and interpretations in shaping feelings and behaviours (Segal, Williams and Teasdale, 2002; Bowen et al., 2011).

Give the group the following instructions:

Sit comfortably, and close your eyes gently if you feel comfortable to do so or keep your eyes open focusing gently downward.

Imagine that you are walking down a street. This street could be in your own neighborhood or where you work. It is a street that you are familiar with (based on Segal, Williams and Teasdale, 2002; Bowen et al., 2011). Imagine that it is a pleasant summer day and you can hear the birds chirping, the sounds of traffic and other noise around you. You can feel a light breeze on your body and notice other sights around you. Approaching you on the other side of the street, you notice a familiar face. When the person gets closer, you wave and smile at them. The person continues without any response.

What thoughts and reactions come up for you?

Participants share in the large group. The facilitator can use a flipchart to record their responses and note the various reactions to this scenario. There is no right or wrong response.

This exercise gives an example of how our thoughts can determine and influence our emotional reactions and moods. The point here is that there can be so many different reactions and interpretations to an event, depending on what we each bring to it, and there is no right or wrong. These reactions and interpretations can sometimes have a profound effect on us, causing unnecessary pain and anguish. Mindfulness practise can be helpful in allowing us to detach from these reactions and therefore derail any further suffering.

COPING WITH URGES AND CRAVINGS IN A DIFFERENT WAY: URGE SURFING

Instead of fighting an urge to gamble, Bowen et al. (2011) encourage a person to think of the urge like the movement of an ocean wave. Both come and go. Instead of fighting an urge to gamble, a person should imagine they are surfing, with the urge to gamble being like the wave. The wave rises and falls and eventually dissipates, as it is impermanent, like everything else.

Urge surfing is based on Bowen et al. (2011) and Lloyd (2003).



The surfboard could be like your breath, which you can use to help you to ride the wave of the urge. Urges can be challenging when they occur and throw you off balance, but with practise, you can learn to ride the wave of the urge until it subsides. You can then feel like you are on solid ground again.

Urge surfing can help a person overcome overconfidence, resist “self-testing” or the need to prove one’s control and avoid self-blaming (Lloyd, 2003). “Riding the waves” can also help people deal with other situations that carry a high risk for relapse, as described by Turner et al. (2014). Instead of fighting the urge, you accept that the urge will come and go and you experience the urge passing through your consciousness.

RECONNECTING WITH OUR INNER STEADFASTNESS: MOUNTAIN MEDITATION

Stress, family problems and other worries and responsibilities can sometimes be difficult to tolerate. Then an urge to gamble can overwhelm you, like an avalanche about to crush you.

To help combat this urge, you can try another technique—mountain meditation, as described by Bowen et al. (2011). Mountain meditation involves imagining yourself like a mountain. A mountain is steadfast, strong and unmoving, despite the weather and changing seasons—the snowstorms, hailstorms, wind, rain, fire, cold, extreme heat and landslides. The mountain is like the awareness of the breath and present moment, unmoving and still, like the blue sky that is always under the clouds or the stillness that is always at the depths of the ocean. Practising this meditation can help to cultivate the same qualities of perseverance, steadfastness and stillness.

Imagine being this mountain:

Calm, steadfast and serene. To a mountain, the wind, the weather, storms or an avalanche are insignificant. In the middle of this photo are two small avalanche paths. From the perspective of the mountain, they are tiny and insignificant disturbances.

HOME PRACTISE

Tell participants to practise the body scan at home and bring mindfulness to a routine activity such as brushing your teeth, eating, cooking, or taking a shower. They should note any barriers to practise that come up and the thoughts and feelings associated with these barriers. While exploring these barriers, they should ask themselves: What do you tell yourself?

CLOSING

Ask participants to say what they are noticing in the present moment, indicating their thoughts, feelings or body sensations.

Mountain meditation is based on Bowen et al. (2011) and Kabat-Zinn (1990).



MEDITATION SCRIPT FOR FACILITATOR

The facilitator can develop their own script spontaneously as they lead the practise.

Urge Surfing

This exercise uses the metaphor of surfing to show how you can cope with urges to gamble or with urges to do something that you might regret later, such as getting into an argument or lashing out at someone. The ocean wave represents the urge to gamble or act out while the surfboard is your breath, as you use the awareness of your breath to keep you steady and grounded.

You are invited to recall a situation that may have been challenging and put you at risk to react in an unskillful way, but please don't choose a situation that is overwhelming when you think about it. You want to choose a situation where you are able to follow through without gambling or reacting by using your breath to ground you.

When you are able to call such a situation to mind, notice what emotions are present. Where do you feel them in your body? What sensations are you noticing? What thoughts are arising? Who else is involved? What are you saying to each other? Where are you? What time of day is it?

If at any point you feel overwhelmed, you can choose to stop and step out of the exercise. Please respect your limits and take care of yourself as needed.

Now that you have this situation in your awareness, bring your attention to your breath. Notice the breath going in and out of your body. Notice any sensations in the rest of your body. Stay with the awareness of the breath as you ride the wave of the emotions that arose as you recalled the event.

Keep in mind that urges, like ocean waves, don't last forever. They come and go and subside eventually. You just need to stay steady and focused on your breath while the urge plays itself out.

The recollection of the event takes you out of the present moment. Bringing your awareness back to your breath helps you to return to the present and ground you so you can respond with awareness.

Stay with the awareness of your breath and the sensations in your body for as long as you need to in order to return you to a place of being on solid ground.

MOUNTAIN MEDITATION SCRIPT FOR FACILITATOR

The facilitator can adapt the script spontaneously as they lead the practise.
Sit comfortably and bring awareness to your breath and body.

Mountain Meditation

Bring to mind a mountain. It could be a mountain that you have visited or seen in the movies or just imagined in your mind. The mountain may be so tall that there is still snow at the summit. It is covered by trees, rock and a couple streams run down the side.

The seasons come and go.

In the winter, the mountain is covered by snow and ice. All the trees are bare and the water in the streams are frozen at the surface. There are snowstorms and the occasional avalanche and the temperature is very cold. Eventually, the temperature gets warmer, the snow and ice melts and winter turns to spring. Leaves appear on the trees again and the vegetation turns green and lush. Snowstorms now become rainstorms and lightning, and the water rushes down the sides of the mountain, carrying melted snow and ice.

With passing time, the temperature rises even higher, making way for summer and blistering heat from the intense sun. Everything is in full bloom and the wildlife can be seen everywhere. Sometimes the wind picks up and thunder and lightning become a part of the weather.

Summer eventually gives way to autumn, as the leaves fall off the trees and the temperature starts to drop again. The animals get ready for hibernation by fattening themselves up and storing food for the winter.

As the years go by, the seasons come and go and cover the mountain with rain, snow, lightning, wind and sun. The mountain remains steady beneath all this.

This is similar to our awareness of the passage of emotions, thoughts and life events throughout our lives. Like the mountain, we can remain steadfast and accept passing seasons of life events with equanimity.



Handout 1: Session 2

Developing awareness and coping with cravings and barriers to practise

This session focused on learning to attend to our triggers with full awareness. We practised observing our experiences without automatically reacting. This involves learning to attend to our triggers in the moment and bringing non-judgmental awareness to the body sensations, thoughts and feelings associated with the triggers. Mindfulness practises help with developing this awareness. With practise, we can interrupt the automatic reactions that are typically associated with triggers, allowing us to make healthier, more skillful choices in the moment.

HOME PRACTISE

- 1 Practise the body scan for five or six days this week.
- 2 Continue doing daily activities mindfully (e.g. drinking tea, washing dishes, brushing teeth, eating).



Handout 2: Session 2

Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention for Problem Gambling (MBRPPG)

BARRIERS TO MEDITATION

Mindfulness meditation has been around for thousands of years and so have the barriers or challenges to meditation. These barriers are common to us all. They do not mean that you are doing it wrong. Refer back to how we define mindfulness meditation:

Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally. (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p.4)

This means we must notice whatever is happening in the present moment with curiosity and non-judgment. It not about doing it right, nor is it about getting rid of whatever is happening before being able to practise. We don't have to wait for conditions to be right before we can practise.

Barriers to meditation can originate from five main areas or habits of mind, as described by Bowen et al. (2011) and by Fronsdal (2016).

THE FOLLOWING ARE A LIST OF THESE HABITS THAT BECOME BARRIERS:

- 1 Desire/sensual pleasures
These include craving, wanting, pulling toward, not being content with the present moment and wanting something other than what is. People may not necessarily see these desires as bad.
- 2 Aversion and ill-will
Not wanting to focus on the here and now can generate feelings such as irritation, anger and frustration.

3 Sloth and torpor/ sluggishness and sleepiness

A goal of practising mindfulness is to develop a mind that is both tranquil and alert. Too much tranquility and a lack of alertness lead to drowsiness, sluggishness, low energy, sleepiness and lethargy. Too much alertness without tranquility can lead to tension and anxiety (discussed below). Sloth and torpor can be a reaction to the constant habit of tension and anxiety.

4 Restlessness and anxiety or worry

Sometimes, putting too much effort into anything can result in an agitated mind or the feeling that the mind is racing. This is the opposite of barrier three (sloth, sleepiness and sluggishness). You need to find a balance between being overly tranquil and being overly alert.

5 Doubt

Doubt can make us confused and indecisive, causing us to hold back and not fully apply ourselves. It creates feelings of uncertainty, which then can create more doubt: "To have doubts about the value of mindfulness, borders on having doubts about the value of being present for life in general" (Fronsdal, 2016, p. 7).

The barriers noted above are not only barriers to meditation, but can also be barriers to what we want to do in life. They can colour and dull the mind. When these barriers are absent, the mind is clear and sharp. These barriers are based on Bowen et al. (2011) and Fronsdal (2016).

USE THE RAIN FORMULA (FRONSDAL, 2016) TO HELP YOU DEAL WITH THESE HINDRANCES:

R Recognize them when they are present as barriers. Which hindrance or combination of hindrances are they?

A Accept these sensations. Do not try to resist. Let them wash over you.

I Investigate and be curious about your doubts, your desires and your aversion. What are they like? How do these hindrances feel in the body? Are they pleasant? Unpleasant? Changing? How does this barrier make you feel emotionally? What is the energy level of these feelings? Do you feel like you are rushing, sinking, lifting? What are your thoughts, beliefs or stories about these feelings? Do you have an urge to act? What are you clinging to?

N Not identify with them. Such feelings are just passing mental events and are impermanent. They do not define you. Let the sensations go.

LIST HINDRANCES AND BARRIERS TO PRACTISE MINDFULNESS THAT YOU'VE EXPERIENCED.

Hindrance or barrier to meditation you have experienced	Plan of how to overcome this barrier



Handout 3: Session 2

Meditation techniques

COPING WITH URGES AND CRAVINGS IN A DIFFERENT WAY: URGE SURFING

When you feel an urge to gamble, imagine that it is like surfing: the urge to gamble is like a wave. The wave rises and falls and eventually dissipates, as it is impermanent like everything else. The surfboard could be like your breath. You can use it to help you to ride the wave of the urge. The point here is that urges come and go. They can be challenging when they occur and throw you off balance, but with practise, you can learn to ride the wave of the urge until it subsides and you feel like you are on solid ground again.

RECONNECTING WITH OUR INNER STEADFASTNESS: MOUNTAIN MEDITATION

Stress, family problems and other worries and responsibilities can sometimes be difficult to tolerate. An urge to gamble can be overwhelming, like an avalanche about to crush you.

Mountain meditation involves imagining yourself like a mountain. A mountain is steadfast, strong and unmoving, despite what is happening around it, such as the weather and changing seasons. There can be snowstorms, hailstorms, wind, rain, fire, cold, extreme heat or landslides, but the mountain perseveres and remains steadfast. The mountain is like the awareness of your breath and present moment, unmoving and still, like the blue sky that is always under the clouds or the stillness that is always at the depths of the ocean. Practising this meditation can help to cultivate mountain-like qualities of perseverance, steadfastness and stillness.

IMAGINE BEING THIS MOUNTAIN

Calm, steadfast and serene. To a mountain, the wind, the weather, storms or an avalanche are insignificant. In the middle of this photo are two small avalanche paths. From the perspective of the mountain, they are tiny and insignificant disturbances.

Urge surfing meditation is based on Bowen et al. (2011) and Lloyd (2003).
Mountain meditation is based on Bowen et al. (2011) and Kabat-Zinn (1990).



**Mindfulness practise
supports us in
increasing our awareness
and helps us to make
more skillful and healthy
lifestyle choices.**



Chapter 7: Session 3

Lesson plan for bringing mindfulness to everyday activities

A regular mindfulness practise can support us in increasing our awareness and helping us to make more skillful and healthy lifestyle choices. Becoming aware of the breath is a simple practise that brings us into the present moment, as we pause and pay attention to our breath and the sensations in our bodies. In this state of being in the present moment, we are more aware, less reactive and able to make choices from a clearer state of thinking and being. The three-step breathing space is a mindfulness practise that can be done anywhere and anytime. It can be done in daily situations and as we face challenges, whether we feel stressed, have a craving to gamble or are reactive.

CHECK IN

Ask participants to say their first names and one thing that they are noticing in the present moment, indicating thoughts, feelings or body sensations.



AGENDA

Check in

Awareness
of hearing

Home
practise
review

Breath
meditation

Video

Three-step
breathing
space

Home
practise

Closing

AWARENESS OF HEARING

Invite participants to tune into their sense of hearing, becoming aware of sounds. We can become aware of the present moment by tuning into our five senses, or “coming to our senses,” which is the title of a book by Jon Kabat-Zinn. Participants should try to become aware of sounds without any judgment about what is being heard. Try to listen without words or concepts: Do not try to figure out what the sound is or where it is coming from. Imagine that we do not yet have any language to describe what we hear. Participants can notice the automatic tendency of the mind to add commentary to everything, often with judgment. Invite participants to cultivate an attitude of curiosity and friendliness to all experience and to have a beginner’s mind.

HOME PRACTISE REVIEW

Ask participants about their home practise. Were they able to do it? If they did, how was it? If they were not able to do it, what got in the way? Refer back to session two, which discusses how challenges to meditation are common.

BREATH MEDITATION

This week, you will introduce a different meditation to your participants, mindfulness of the breath.

This meditation is usually practised sitting on the floor or on a chair but can also be done lying down, if the person has any physical limitations or would prefer this.

It is important to adopt a posture that denotes dignity and alertness. As mentioned earlier, mindfulness meditation is about falling awake rather than falling asleep. Try to keep the back straight, but not stiff, with the head balanced on top of the shoulders. If sitting on a chair, have your legs uncrossed and feet flat on the ground. You may also want to sit with your back away from the backrest of the chair as slouching or leaning on the back of the chair may promote sleepiness. If seated on the ground, it may be more comfortable to sit on a meditation cushion, if one is available, so your buttocks are higher than your knees.

Breath awareness is one of the most fundamental meditations in mindfulness. The object of focus is the breath. We bring our attention to the breath as it goes in and out, not thinking about the breath, but feeling the sensations of the breath in each given moment. The practise is not just about staying with the breath, but also noticing the patterns of the mind, noticing what the mind does from moment to moment and where it tends to go. Acknowledge where the mind goes to—such as body sensations, feelings or thoughts—and then gently bring it back to the breath. Just as going to the gym and doing repetitions with weights builds up the muscles, this practise of repeatedly bringing the mind back to the breath strengthens the mind.

Breath awareness is one of the most fundamental meditations in mindfulness.

Breathing as an object of focus is important for a few reasons:

It is always happening in the present moment, so it connects us to the present. It is happening in the body, so it connects us to our bodies.

It is portable, so we can take it wherever we go.

It is always happening and there is nothing we need to do. The body knows how to breathe. We just need to let go and let it be.

VIDEO

Show the video *Healing and the Mind* with Bill Moyers (1993), which documents the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center with Jon Kabat-Zinn. The video is about 40 minutes long and follows a group through the eight-week program, demonstrating how the members benefit from what they learned in the group. Even though the group members in the video are there for physical health issues, rather than addiction or mental health concerns, the benefits are similar. The impact that mindfulness meditation can have on people's lives is similar, regardless of the issue concerned.

In the video, group members learn and apply the skills and attitudes of mindfulness meditation, which include:

Being fully present, here and now.

Experiencing unpleasant thoughts and feelings without judgment.

Not avoiding.

Having greater connectedness with self and environment.

Having greater self-awareness.

Being less disturbed and less reactive to unpleasant experiences.

Letting be and letting go.

Being aware of the impermanence of everything

Having greater balance in life

Developing greater calm and peacefulness

Nurturing self-acceptance and self-compassion

The group leader can ask group members for comments or reactions following the video.

THREE-STEP BREATHING SPACE

This is an adaptation of the three-minute breathing space from the Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) program. It is also known by the acronym SOBER (Stop, Observe, Breathe, Expand, Respond), described by Bowen et al. (2011). This method is used in the Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention (MBRP) program for people dealing with substance use problems. It has been modified here for those who have a gambling problem. It works well for clients with either of these problems.

This brief practise is a portable, quick and easy technique for connecting with the present and bringing awareness to whatever you are experiencing in the moment. It can be used as a time out or a strategy for dealing with stressful situations.

The steps are:

1 Become aware

Become aware of what is happening right now by tuning into your senses, feelings, body sensations and thoughts. What are you noticing happening right now? What are you seeing? What are you hearing? What sensations are you noticing in your body? What thoughts are arising in the mind?

2 Breathe

Become aware of your breath as it goes in and out of your body. Notice your chest and belly rising and falling with each breath in and out. What is the quality of your breath? Is it fast, slow, deep or shallow? Just allow breathing to happen without thinking too much about it.

3 Body

Become aware of your entire body, expanding your awareness beyond your breath. Now that you are more fully in the present moment, how would you respond to this moment?

HOME PRACTISE

Home practise for this week will include practising the breath meditation using the recording provided and the three-step breathing space. Also, continue to bring mindful awareness to routine activities such as eating, walking, taking a shower and brushing your teeth.

CLOSING

Ask participants to state what they notice in the present moment, indicating thoughts, feelings or body sensations.

MEDITATION SCRIPT FOR FACILITATOR

The facilitator can adapt the script spontaneously as they lead the practise.

Awareness of hearing

Allow yourself to settle into the present moment and notice what is happening right now. Notice the sensations of your body resting on the chair. Notice the sensations of your feet resting on the floor. Notice your breath as it goes in and out of your body.

Now, bring your attention to your sense of hearing. Hear any and all sounds. Bring an attitude of curiosity and non-judgment to this experience of hearing. Notice the quality of the sounds. Notice the mind's tendency to want to label the sounds—a car horn, trees, birds, people, traffic—and know where they are coming from. What would hearing be like if we had no language to label each sound?

Notice that hearing is usually accompanied by thinking. Try to separate the hearing from your internal commentary and just hear, with no language to describe what is being heard.

You can also become aware of your breath at the same time that hearing is happening. What does that feel like?

INQUIRY

What did you notice in doing this practise? Stay with the direct experience of the exercise rather than trying to interpret it.

Based on Bowen et al. (2011), Segal et al. (2002) and Kabat-Zinn (1990).]

MEDITATION SCRIPT FOR FACILITATOR

The facilitator can adapt the script spontaneously as they lead the practise.

Breath meditation practise

Allow yourself to settle into the present moment and sit comfortably in your chair.

Posture is important during meditation practise. Adopt a posture that feels comfortable for you and that will help you to stay awake. Keep your back straight, but not stiff. Uncross your legs and arms to allow the energy to flow freely through your body. You may want to sit with your back away from the backrest of the chair, so that it is self-supporting.

Notice what is happening right now, in terms of thoughts, feelings or body sensations.

Notice the sensations of your body resting on the chair and your feet planted firmly on the ground. You may close your eyes if you feel comfortable doing so. If you prefer to keep your eyes open, focus gently downward, a few feet in front of you.

Bring your attention to the sense of hearing and notice sounds. Notice the quality of sounds. Notice at what point your hearing and the sound intersect.

Try to stay with the experience of hearing. Try not to think about what you are hearing.

Leaving hearing in the background, now bring your attention to the breath. Notice where in your body you are experiencing breathing—the chest, belly, nostrils. Notice the chest and belly as they rise and fall with each breath in and out.

Notice that the body knows how to breathe. There is nothing that you need to do to make it happen, just allow it to happen.

Notice the quality of the breath. Is it fast, slow, deep or shallow?

Notice, with curiosity, when the mind has wandered away from the breath. Maybe the mind was drawn to thoughts, feelings or body sensations. This is normal and happens a lot. It is what the mind does. If you noticed that thinking was happening, just label it as “thinking” and gently bring your attention back to the breath, without judgment.

This practise is as much staying with the breath as it is bringing the mind back from where it wandered.

Continue to stay with the breath.

When you are ready, gently open your eyes, while maintaining awareness.

INQUIRY

What did you notice in doing this practise?

Stay with the direct experience of having done the practise without any interpretations about the practise.



Handout 1: Session 3

Bringing mindfulness to everyday activities

A regular mindfulness practise can support us in increasing our awareness and help us to make more skillful and healthy lifestyle choices. Becoming aware of the breath is a simple practise that brings us into the present moment, as we pause and pay attention to our breath and sensations in our body. In this state of being in the present moment, we are more aware, less reactive and able to make choices from a clearer state of thinking and being. The three-step breathing space is a mindfulness practise that can be done anywhere and anytime. You can use the technique in the daily situations and challenges that you may face, whether it is feeling stressed, craving to gamble or behaving in a reactive manner.

HOME PRACTISE

- 1 Practise the sitting meditation six days this week.
- 2 Begin to integrate the three-step meditation practise into your daily life.



Handout 2: Session 3

The three-step breathing space

This is a brief three-step meditation practise that can be done anywhere and anytime. It can be used to take a time out from a hectic day or when feeling overwhelmed by a stressful event. It will help when you need to centre yourself and be brought back into the present.

HOME PRACTISE

- 1 Become aware**
Become aware of what is happening right now by tuning into your senses, feelings, body sensations and thoughts. What are you noticing happening right now? What are you seeing? What are you hearing? What sensations are you noticing in your body? What thoughts are arising in the mind?

- 2 Breathe**
Become aware of your breath as it goes in and out. Notice your chest and belly rising and falling with each breath in and out. What is the quality of your breath? Is it fast, slow, deep or shallow? Just allow breathing to happen without thinking much about it.

- 3 Body**
Become aware of your entire body, expanding your awareness from where you are experiencing breathing. Now that you are more fully in the present moment, how would you respond to this moment?

Based on Bowen et al. (2011), Segal et al. (2002) and Kabat-Zinn (1990).



**Mindfulness is about
bringing awareness
to the various thoughts
and emotions that arise
during the craving and
not reacting to them from
a place of automatic pilot.**



Chapter 8: Session 4

Lesson plan for being mindful when at risk to gamble

Mindfulness practises allow us to develop a sense of spaciousness between our thoughts, feelings and behaviours. This sense of spaciousness between stimulus and response is particularly useful in situations where we may feel challenged and triggered. Mindfulness practises can help us stay focused on our breath and sensations in our body, which can keep us in the present moment. We can then relate to gambling and other triggers with awareness, rather than on automatic pilot.

CHECK IN

Ask participants to say their names and one thing they notice in the present moment, indicating thoughts, feelings or body sensations.



AGENDA

Check in

Awareness of seeing

Home practise review

Sitting meditation: Sound, breath, sensation, thought

The inventory of gambling situations

Three-step breathing space in a challenging situation

Walking meditation

Home practise

Closing

AWARENESS OF SEEING

This practise may be easier with a window so that participants can look outside. If no window is available, the facilitator can revert to awareness of hearing.

Tune into your sense of seeing. Notice what you see. Notice when thoughts about what you are seeing arise. Notice when you see without thinking and when thinking is involved. We generally take in external experiences through concepts. We have thoughts and interpretations about what we sense, whether it is seeing, feeling, tasting, smelling or hearing. We are rarely just seeing without interpretations or judgments. We usually interpret what we see in the external world through concepts and preconceptions.

HOME PRACTISE REVIEW

Ask participants about how their home practise went. If they were not able to practise, what barriers came up for them? Discuss and process with non-judgmental curiosity.

SITTING MEDITATION: SOUND, BREATH, SENSATION AND THOUGHT

The previous week's meditation introduced mindfulness of the breath. This week the focus will expand to other sense experiences such as sound, body sensations and thoughts. In later sessions, mindfulness of emotions will be added.

As previously noted, the practise involves bringing non-judgmental awareness to these mental events as they come and go in each passing moment. We tune into the present moment by tuning into our senses. Thoughts are included here, with the mind being the sense organ and thoughts being the sense object.

THE INVENTORY OF GAMBLING SITUATIONS

In this session, you will discuss with participants how they can apply mindfulness to high-risk situations. High-risk situations are times when someone might be triggered to behave reactively, such as gambling, lashing out at someone or withdrawing.

Mindfulness practises can help us stay focused on our breath and sensations in our body, which can keep us in the present moment.

These high-risk situations can be categorized into the following 10 areas, as described in the CAMH Inventory of Gambling Situations (CAMH-IGS) (Turner et al., 2013):

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Negative emotions | 6 Worried about debts |
| 2 Conflict with others | 7 Winning and chasing |
| 3 Pleasant emotions | 8 Confidence in skill |
| 4 Social pressure to gamble | 9 Testing personal control |
| 5 Need for excitement | 10 Urges and temptations |

Each of these categories involves various situations or events that could trigger someone to gamble. The following are explanations of thoughts and emotions associated with these situations or events:

Negative emotions: feelings of boredom, depression, sadness, guilt or other negative emotions.

Conflict with others: a disagreement with someone, like a family member, resulting in feelings of anger and frustration.

Pleasant emotions: feeling good, which according to the CAMH-IGS, may cause someone to gamble excessively or impulsively without worrying about the consequences, such as gambling as a way to celebrate a birthday or anniversary.

Social pressure to gamble: peer pressure, such as friends going to a casino and being asked to join, or being in the company of people discussing the results of a sporting or other gambling event.

Need for excitement: having nothing to do and looking for something to help alleviate boredom.

Worried about debts: worrying or feeling desperate about one's financial situation and thinking that gambling will help solve debt problems.

Winning and chasing: winning, chasing losses or dreaming of winning, which according to the CAMH-IGS, may trigger someone to gamble excessively, to become caught up in gambling or gamble longer than intended. People experiencing this may believe that if they keep gambling they will recoup their losses.

Confidence in skill: feeling confident about your skill or knowing the system even though there is still too much randomness to assure wins over the long term.

Testing personal control: thinking that you can gamble and exercise control and limits, or believing that you can go to the casino and simply be an observer.

Urges and temptations: having gambling opportunities easily available and accessible, or having events or circumstances that make you think of gambling.

Regardless of the situation, practising mindfulness is about bringing awareness to the various thoughts and emotions that arise during the craving and not reacting to them from a place of automatic pilot. The following exercise can be helpful in such a situation.

THREE-STEP BREATHING SPACE IN CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

This is an opportunity to apply the three-step breathing space in a situation where participants find themselves stressed or overwhelmed.

Invite participants to recall a situation where they have felt triggered to react by either gambling or acting out inappropriately. Participants can choose from one of the 10 CAMH-IGS categories listed above. For the purpose of practising the three-step breathing space, ask them to choose a situation that is not too overwhelming and is moderate or mild in intensity. The objective here is for them to learn how to apply the three-step breathing space in challenging situations, in order to step out of automatic pilot and respond from a place of groundedness and clarity.

WALKING MEDITATION

This practise is an opportunity for participants to experience mindful walking. Mindfulness meditation is about learning to be present without judgment. There are many ways to cultivate presence, walking being one of them. The focus here is on the act of walking and noticing what is happening in the body and mind. What body sensations are present and what thoughts are arising? How often do people notice what is happening in the moment when they are walking? Are their minds usually

occupied elsewhere? Maybe their minds are already at their destination or still have not left where they are just coming from. Are they fully in the present and aware of their surroundings? Today, people are often focused on their handheld devices, such as cell phones, iPods or tablets, and are texting, talking or listening to something.

Mindful walking, yoga and mindful movement or stretching are like mindful breathing, where we are simply being witnesses to what is unfolding moment by moment, while being unattached. We also observe when thinking is happening and may even get hooked into our thoughts. If this happens, gently let them go and return to witnessing. When we truly witness, we let go of judgment.

Mindfulness places a huge emphasis on awareness of the body because the body is always in the present moment. That is why mindfulness is sometimes referred to as a mind/body or body-centred approach. Sinking into the body grounds us and brings us to awareness and sensing, rather than thinking and conceptualizing.

HOME PRACTISE

Participants are given handouts with home practise included. Participants can practise sitting meditation; the three-step-breathing space, which can be done during a challenging situation; and mindful walking.

CLOSING

Ask participants, “What are you noticing in the present moment about your thoughts, feelings or body sensations?”

MEDITATION SCRIPT FOR FACILITATOR

The facilitator can adapt the script spontaneously as they lead the practise.

Awareness of seeing practise

Bring your attention to your awareness of seeing.

Notice how seeing is almost always accompanied by thinking.

Try to separate the act of seeing from thinking about what is being seen.

Imagine seeing without having words or language to describe what you are seeing.

Imagine what it might be like for babies, who do not yet have the ability to speak.

We usually see things through concepts, interpretations and judgments or preconceived biases.

Stay with the breath while doing this practise, as this can help you to stay focused on the present.

INQUIRY

What was it like doing this practise?

What did you notice?

Stay with the direct experience of doing the practise.

Based on Bowen et al. (2011), Segal et al. (2002) and Kabat-Zinn (1990).

MEDITATION SCRIPT FOR FACILITATOR

The facilitator can adapt the script spontaneously as they lead the practise.

Sitting meditation practise: Sound, breath, body sensation, thought

Allow yourself to settle into the present moment and sit comfortably in your chair.

Posture is important during meditation practise. Adopt a posture that denotes wakefulness and comfort. Keep your back straight but not stiff. Uncross your legs and arms to allow the energy to flow freely through your body. You may want to sit with your back away from the backrest of the chair, so that it is self-supporting.

Notice what is happening right now, in terms of thoughts, feelings or body sensations.

Notice the sensations of your body resting on the chair and your feet planted firmly on the ground. You may close your eyes if you feel comfortable doing so. If you prefer to keep your eyes open, focus gently downward, a few feet in front of you.

Bring your attention to the sense of hearing, noticing sounds. Notice the quality of sounds. Notice at what point your hearing and the sound intersect.

Try to stay with the experience of hearing. Try not to think about what you are hearing.

Leaving hearing in the background, now bring your attention to the breath. Notice where in your body you are experiencing breathing: the chest, belly, nostrils. Notice the chest and belly as they rise and fall with each breath in and out.

Notice that the body knows how to breathe. There is nothing that you need to do to make it happen; just allow it to happen.

Notice the quality of the breath. Is it fast, slow, deep or shallow?

Notice, with curiosity, when the mind has wandered away from the breath, , maybe due to being drawn to thoughts, feelings or body sensations. This is normal and happens a lot. It's what the mind does. If you noticed that thinking was happening, just label it as "thinking" and gently bring your attention back to the breath, without judgment.

This practise is as much about staying with the breath as it is about bringing the mind back from where it wandered.

Continue to stay with the breath for a few more moments.

Now expand your awareness to the rest of your body as a whole. Scan for any compelling sensations or tension.

If there are any sensations that are drawing your attention, rest your awareness on that sensation and breathe into it. When ready, you can bring your awareness back to the rest of the body.

Again, notice when the mind has wandered away from awareness of the body to thoughts, feelings or sounds.

When this happens, gently bring your attention back to awareness of the body, without judgment.

Now shift your attention away from the body, leaving it in the background and bring your attention to any thoughts that may be arising. See if you can notice the next thought.

Observe thoughts as you may observe clouds floating across the sky.

Notice when you get carried away by a particular thought and find yourself lost in it, rather than just observing it from the outside.

After observing thoughts for a few moments, come back to the breath and stay with the breath.

When you are ready, gently open your eyes, while maintaining awareness.

INQUIRY

What did you notice in doing this practise?

Stay with the direct experience of having done the practise without making interpretations about the practise.

MEDITATION SCRIPT FOR FACILITATOR

The facilitator can adapt the script spontaneously as they lead the practise.

Three-step breathing space in challenging situations

Recall a time, maybe recently, when you felt triggered and gambling crossed your mind. For the purpose of this practise, do not choose a situation that is the most challenging but something that is mildly or moderately intense.

When you have brought this situation to mind:

- 1 The first step**
Become aware of what is happening in the moment. What body sensations are you noticing? For example, is your heart beating faster? Are you sweating? Is your mind racing? Are your muscles tense? And what thoughts and emotions arise for you? Remember to bring an attitude of non-judgmental curiosity to what you are experiencing.

 - 2 The second step**
Bring your attention to where in your body you are noticing breathing happening. This will help you to become more fully present.

 - 3 The third step**
Expand your awareness to your entire body.
-

Now, from a place of increased groundedness in the present moment, how would you like to respond to this situation?

Based on the SOBER Breathing Space concept described by Bowen et al (2011), Segal et al. (2002) and Kabat-Zinn (1990). We have modified the concept to be more acceptable to addiction clients who do not have a substance use problem.

MEDITATION SCRIPT FOR FACILITATOR

The facilitator can adapt the script spontaneously as they lead the practise.

Walking meditation

Depending on the space available, participants can walk in a circle or along a hallway and then return, going back and forth a few times.

Use the following instructions to guide the participants:

- Stand with your feet comfortably apart and find your centre of balance by rocking side to side.
-
- Keeping eyes open and focused gently downward, walk slowly while paying attention to the sensations of walking.
-
- Notice the shift in body weight from the left leg to the right leg as you walk.
-
- Notice the left foot lifting and stepping forward as all the weight rests on the right leg, keeping the knees slightly bent in the right leg for balance.
-
- Notice what the balancing feels like as one leg is lifting.
-
- Notice the heel of the left leg as it contacts the floor and the rest of the foot follows.
-
- Now repeat this with the right leg. Pay attention as this leg steps forward and all the body weight is now transferred to the left leg.
-
- Repeat this process of lifting and shifting the body weight over and over. Notice what is happening with the rest of the body as walking takes place.
-
- Notice what is happening in the mind; for example, are there any thoughts such as, “this is silly”?
-
- Continue this process for a few minutes while remembering to breathe throughout this process.
-

INQUIRY

Ask participants “What did you notice in doing this practise?”

Stay with the direct experience of doing the walking meditation practise.



Handout 1: Session 4

Being mindful when at risk to gamble

Mindfulness practises allow us to develop a sense of spaciousness from our thoughts, feelings and behaviours. This sense of spaciousness between stimulus and response is particularly useful in situations where we may feel challenged and triggered. Mindfulness practises can help us to stay focused on our breath and the sensations in our body. This can keep us in the present moment. We can relate to gambling and other triggers with awareness, instead of relating while on automatic pilot.

HOME PRACTISE

- 1 Practise sitting meditation six days a week.
- 2 Practise the three-step breathing space regularly and notice when you are experiencing challenging emotions, thoughts or bodysensations.
- 3 Practise walking mindfully and paying attention to walking. You can focus on the act of walking and what it feels like in the body. You can also alternate between awareness of the different senses: seeing, hearing, smelling and body sensations. If you are walking outside, notice what is happening around you as you walk. Notice the sounds of birds, traffic, other people, the wind and so on. Also notice what is happening in your mind and body.



Handout 2: Session 4

Walking meditation

NOT MINDFUL: THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE OR THE PAST.



MINDFUL WALKING: BEING IN THE MOMENT.





Handout 3: Session 4

High-risk situations

Negative emotions: feeling anger, sadness, boredom, depression.

Conflict with others: having arguments, not being treated well, feeling anger and frustration.

Pleasant emotions: being in a good mood, having a celebration.

Social pressure to gamble: others wanting to gamble or inviting you to a game.

Need for excitement: needing excitement or action, or needing to alleviate boredom.

Worried about debts: mounting debts, trying to solve debt problem.

Winning and chasing: having wins or memories of wins, chasing losses, dreaming of past winning.

Confidence in skill: being confident in your skill or knowledge of the system, thinking you now know how to win.

Testing personal control: believing you can now control your gambling, testing your will power.

Urges and temptations: having a craving triggered by a nearby casino or advertisement.



**Mindfulness meditation
is an opportunity to
notice discomfort and
how you relate to it.**



Chapter 9: Session 5

Lesson plan for cultivating a different relationship to experience through acceptance and clear seeing

Stressful situations can leave us feeling triggered and filled with negative emotions. In these instances, it becomes difficult to accept what is happening in the moment. For example, getting stuck in traffic on the way to a very important work meeting, after having left home early to get there, can leave us feeling frustrated and overwhelmed. These kinds of situations can be triggers for gambling because they leave us feeling defeated. There are many situations that are not in our control. When we learn to accept what is happening in the moment, we are not struggling with or resisting what is already happening. Accepting and allowing “what is” without resistance or judgment is the first step in the change process. When we accept ourselves and the situations around us as they are, we are on the journey for long-term beneficial change. Acceptance does not mean being passive but is a first step toward action.



AGENDA

Check in

Sitting meditation: Sound, breath, sensation, thought, emotion. Read Rumi's poem, *The Guest House* at the end of this meditation

Practise review

Three-step breathing space

Applying the three-step breathing space in high-risk situations

What does acceptance mean?

Mindful movement

Home practise

Closing

CHECK IN

Invite participants to say their names and one thing they are noticing in the present moment, indicating thoughts, feelings or body sensations.

SITTING MEDITATION: SOUND, BREATH, BODY SENSATION, THOUGHT AND EMOTION

Practise mindfulness of sound, breath, body sensation, thought and emotion with participants. This meditation is an opportunity to notice discomfort and how you relate to it. Our usual tendency is to push away or deny what is unpleasant or painful and hang on to experiences that are pleasant or feel good. This meditation is an opportunity to cultivate a different way of relating to all experiences, uncomfortable or pleasant.

When we get in the habit of resisting and pushing away unpleasant experiences, we never learn to effectively deal with adversity. In Rumi's poem, "The Guest House," he describes inviting in all experiences, with laughter and gratitude, as they may be "clearing us out for some new delight."

PRACTISE REVIEW

Review how participants' home practises went. If they were able to practise, how was it and what did they notice? If participants were not able to practise, what got in the way? Review the barriers from week two that may apply here. Encourage participants to observe what barriers got in the way, without judgment, and to ask questions about the practise.

THREE-STEP BREATHING SPACE

Ask participants to pair up and talk with their partners about something that tends to annoy or frustrate them, such as waiting in line or traffic. After a few minutes, once both partners have had a chance to get into their situations, ask them to stop and do the three-step breathing space. You can coach participants through this. After, ask participants what they observed from doing this exercise. Did it help them to regain presence and calm down?

APPLYING THE THREE-STEP BREATHING SPACE IN HIGH-RISK SITUATIONS

This is an opportunity for participants to practise the three-step breathing space in a high-risk situation. Invite them to recall a situation that was difficult for them, but not overwhelming, such as an argument with someone or some other situation where

Accepting and allowing “what is” without resistance or judgment is the first step in the change process.

they may have been triggered to gamble. When they have imagined themselves back in the situation, they can then practise the three-step breathing space as a way of centring themselves and evaluating their choices for action.

WHAT DOES ACCEPTANCE MEAN?

Brainstorm with participants what comes to mind when they hear the word “acceptance” and use a flipchart to record participants’ responses. Refer to the list on the flipchart to generate a discussion. This is an opportunity for the group to discuss the concept of acceptance and what it means to them.

Remind group members that acceptance is a simple concept but can be difficult to achieve.

Questions for group members to consider:

- What does acceptance mean?

- What does acceptance have to do with being fully present?

- Can you be fully present without being accepting of what is happening in the present moment?

Acceptance does not mean condoning or agreeing, nor is it about being passive.

Remind group members of the following “Serenity Prayer” to generate further discussion:

Grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.

MINDFUL MOVEMENT

Like walking meditation, this is another opportunity for participants to practise various movements and stretches to cultivate awareness of the body. These movements and stretches can be grounded in yoga, tai chi or martial arts training as examples of

disciplines conducive to cultivating mindful awareness of the mind–body connection. The body is always in the present moment and it is the perfect doorway for entering the present moment, such as in the awareness of breathing. See the yoga images and accompanying instruction on pages 101, which you can hand out to participants for them to continue to practise at home. You may use these or other movements of their choice.

HOME PRACTISE

Distribute handouts to participants for the home practise, which includes sitting meditation, the three-step breathing space and mindful movement.

CLOSING

Ask participants to say their names and one thing they notice in the present moment, indicating thoughts, feelings or body sensations.

MEDITATION SCRIPT FOR FACILITATOR

The facilitator can adapt the script spontaneously as they lead the practise.

Sitting meditation practise: Sound, breath, body sensation, thought

Allow yourself to settle into the present moment and sit comfortably in your chair.

Posture is important during meditation practise. Adopt a posture that promotes wakefulness and comfort. Keep your back straight, but not stiff. Uncross your legs and arms so as to allow the energy to flow freely through your body. You may want to sit with your back away from the backrest of the chair, so that it is self-supporting.

Notice what is happening with your thoughts, feelings or body sensations.

Notice the sensations of your body resting on the chair and feet planted firmly on the ground. You may close your eyes if you feel comfortable doing so. If you prefer to keep your eyes open, focus gently downward, a few feet in front of you.

Bring your attention to the sense of hearing, noticing sounds. Notice the quality of the sounds. Notice at what point your hearing and the sound intersect.

Try to stay with the experience of hearing, not thinking about what you are hearing.

Leaving hearing in the background, now bring your attention to the breath. Notice where in your body you are experiencing breathing: the chest, belly or nostrils. Notice the chest and belly as they rise and fall with each breath that goes in and out.

Notice that the body knows how to breathe. There is nothing that you need to do to make it happen. Just allow it to happen.

Notice the quality of the breath. Is it fast, slow, deep or shallow?

Notice, with curiosity, when the mind has wandered away from the breath. Maybe the mind was drawn to thoughts, feelings or body sensations. This is normal and happens a lot. It is what the mind does. If you notice that thinking is happening, just label it as “thinking” and gently bring your attention back to the breath, without judgment.

This practise is as much about staying with the breath as it is about bringing the mind back from where it wandered.

Continue to stay with the breath for a few more moments.

Now expand your awareness to the rest of your body. Scan for any compelling sensations or tension.

If there are any sensations that are drawing your attention, then rest your awareness on that sensation and breathe into it. When ready, you can bring your awareness back to the rest of the body.

Again, notice when the mind has wandered away from awareness of the body to thoughts, feelings or sounds.

When this happens, gently bring your attention back to awareness of the body, without judgment.

Now shift your attention away from the body, leaving it in the background and bringing your attention to any thoughts that may be arising. See if you can notice the next thought.

Observe thoughts as you may observe clouds floating across the sky.

Notice if you get carried away by a particular thought and find yourself lost in it, rather than observing it from the outside.

After observing thoughts for a few minutes, leave those thoughts in the background and shift your attention to awareness of emotions.

See if you can notice any emotions present and bring your awareness to them. Also, notice any thoughts that may be associated with the emotions. Try to stay with the sensations of the emotions, the experience of them, without thinking.

Bring your awareness to the breath at the same time and stay with that for a while.

When you are ready, shift your attention away from emotions and focus just on the breath.

When you are ready, gently open your eyes, while maintaining awareness.

INQUIRY

What did you notice in doing this practise?

Stay with the direct experience of having done the practise without interpreting the practise.

**The intention here
is greater awareness
of and groundedness
in the body, while
noticing what is
happening in the mind.**



Copies of this can be provided as a handout.

yoga practise

For this practise, you can lead participants through various movements, such as yoga or stretching exercises, or have them return to mindful walking.

Invite participants to stay present in their bodies while doing this practise and always remember to breathe.

INSTRUCTION

Bring awareness to the sensations in your body, noticing when the mind has wandered and then gently bringing the attention back to sensations in the body.

The intention here is greater awareness of and groundedness in the body, while still noticing what is happening in the mind.



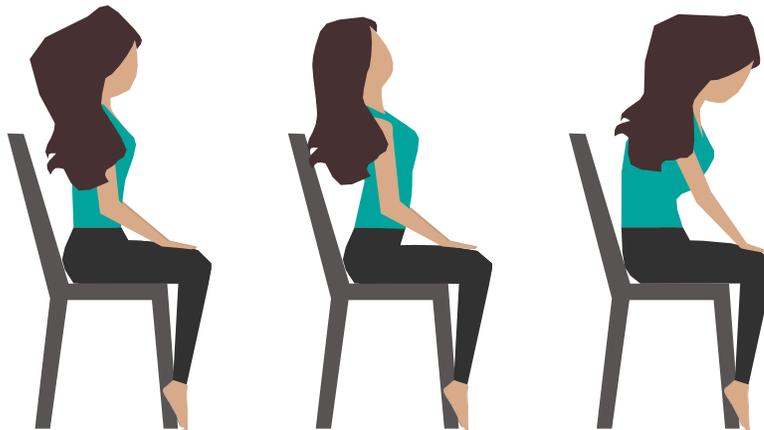
SEATED MOUNTAIN

Sit upright on the edge of the chair. Place your palms on your thighs. Stare straight ahead and ensure that the crown of the head points toward the ceiling. Keep your shoulders down and back in a relaxed position. This pose aids in focusing and improves the alignment of the spine. This is a calming pose and helps with breath awareness.



CAT/COW IN CHAIR

Start by sitting near the front of the chair seat and place hands on the knees. Try to straighten the arms. As you inhale, start to move the pelvis and hips forward so your weight comes more to the front edge of the sitting bones. Then gently lift and lengthen your spine, coming into a gentle cow backbend. Then as you start to exhale, move into a forward cat bend, dropping your chin down, while your middle back moves back. Repeat five times, moving fluidly with each breath. This position supports spinal mobility.



ARM WARM-UP

Stretch your arms outward. Hold. Slowly bring your arms up, inhaling. On the exhale, bring the arms back to an extended position. Repeat this movement seven times slowly. Stay with the breath with each movement. This is a warm up exercise for the upper body.



NECK ROLLS

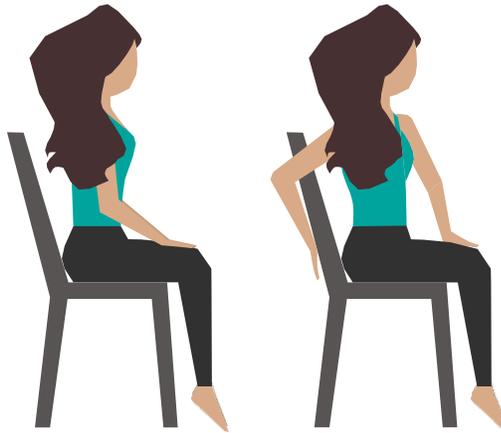
The start position for the neck roll is with the head straight and gaze forward. Before beginning the movement, notice any tension that may be present in the muscles and top of the shoulders. Inhale as you move your head gently to the left.

Pay attention to how your neck feels during this movement. Exhale as you roll your head back to neutral position. Inhale and gently roll your head to the other side. Exhale and return to neutral. Repeat this movement five times on each side. This movement keeps muscles flexible and aids in pain relief.



SEATED TWIST

Sit in the chair with your spine tall and straight. Inhale. As you exhale, twist to one side from the bottom of your spine, moving more from your abdomen than from your back, and grabbing the armrest or back of the chair as you do so. Be gentle and only go to your comfort level. Notice your breathing here as you hold this position for a few seconds and slowly come back to your original position. Repeat on the other side. Do this movement at least three times on each side.



KNEE HUG

Bend both knees toward your chest and place your hands around your knees or shins. Take a deep breath in and gently squeeze your thighs closer to the chest. Hold for 20 to 30 seconds and repeat twice. This posture releases tight muscles around the hips and lower back.



LEG STRETCH

Lying flat on your back on the ground, start by hugging your right knee in toward your chest. Release the knee and then with your leg outstretched, as in the diagram, place a strap (or tie or towel) under the lower leg, as shown in the diagram. Holding on to the strap with both hands, gently stretch the legs straight up as far as you can without discomfort. You will notice a gentle stretching sensation along your right leg, particularly the hamstrings. Hold this position for a few seconds while remembering to breathe. Lower the right leg and then repeat with the strap on the left leg. Do this exercise at least twice on each side. This position stretches the hamstring muscles.



PELVIC TILT/BRIDGE POSE

Lie flat on the floor with arms on the side. You can place a blanket under your shoulders to protect your neck. Bend your knees so that your feet are now flat on the ground as in the diagram. Keep your arms beside your body, palms facing down. Inhaling, slowly lift your back off the floor, gently roll in the shoulders, supporting your weight with your shoulders, arms and feet. Keep breathing easily. Exhale as you gently release the pose. Slowly repeat this movement seven times. This posture is beneficial for strengthening the back and stretches the chest, neck and spine.

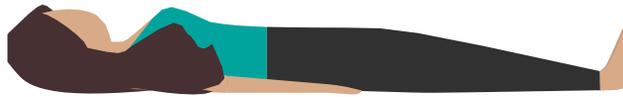


CORPSE RESTING POSE

Lie flat on your back, letting the arms and legs drop open as feels right. You can place a blanket or cushion under or over your body, as is comfortable. Close the eyes and take slow deep breaths through the nose. Allow your whole body to become soft, letting it relax onto the floor. As the body relaxes, feel the whole body rising and falling with each breath. Scan the body from the toes to the top of the head and consciously relax and release any tension. Let your body move into a deeper state of relaxation. Try to stay in this position for at least 10 minutes.

To release, slowly deepen the breath, wiggle the toes and fingers, reach the arms overhead and stretch out the entire body. Exhale, bend the knees into the chest and roll over to one side, into fetal position. Slowly, inhale up to a seated position.

This pose is essential to any yoga practise. It rejuvenates the body and mind while reducing tension and stress.



Adapted from exercises based on Bowen et al. (2011), Segal et al. (2002) and Kabat-Zinn (1990) as well as our own clinical practise and research (Jindani et al., 2015).



Handout 1: Session 5

Cultivating a different relationship to experience through acceptance and clear seeing

Stressful situations can leave us feeling triggered and filled with negative emotions. In these instances, it becomes difficult to accept what is happening in the moment. For example, intentionally leaving home early to make sure you're on time for an important work meeting and then getting stuck in traffic on the way can leave you feeling understandably frustrated and overwhelmed. These kinds of situations can be triggers for gambling because they leave us feeling defeated. Many situations are not in our control: when we learn to accept what is happening in the moment, we won't struggle with or resist what is already happening. Accepting and allowing "what is" without resistance or judgment is the first step in the change process. When we accept ourselves and the situations around us as they are, we are on the journey for long-term beneficial change. Acceptance does not mean being passive, but is a first step toward action.

HOME PRACTISE

- 1 Practise sitting meditation, body scan or mindful walking five or six days this week.
- 2 Practise the three-step breathing space regularly and notice thoughts and body sensations that arise.



Handout 3: Session 5

The Guest House

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice.
Meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.

Be grateful for whatever comes.
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

Jelaluddin Rumi

**Mindfulness is paying
attention to our
wandering minds.**



Chapter 10: Session 6

Lesson plan for seeing thoughts as passing mental events

Mindfulness meditation encourages us to notice and become aware of our wandering minds and then come back to the present moment by focusing on our body sensations and the breath. Similarly, we can learn to intentionally bring awareness to our thoughts as they come and go. Thoughts are not facts. They can be seen as passing mental events. They can come in the form of images or words that we may or may not choose to believe, similar to the images on a movie screen. Notice how our thoughts tend to be repetitive and go around in circles.

In this session, you will introduce your participants to how thoughts are involved in the gambling relapse process.



AGENDA

Check in

Sitting meditation:
Thoughts

Home practise review

Connection between thoughts and relapse

The relapse process

Three-step breathing space

Developing your home practise to promote continuity after the eight weeks

Closing

Gambling related thoughts can include:

I am feeling lucky.

I can win.

This is my lucky day.

I am due for a win.

I will only stay for one hour and spend just \$50.

Ask participants “What are other gambling related thoughts have you had?”

CHECK IN

Ask participants to say their names and one thing they notice in the present moment, indicating thoughts, feelings or body sensations.

SITTING MEDITATION: THOUGHTS

The focus of this sitting meditation will be on awareness of thoughts. This involves observing thoughts without judgment as they come and go, in and out of awareness. It can be helpful to see thoughts as a metaphor for passing mental events, rather than engaging in the content of the thought.

The first metaphor is of clouds floating across the sky. Many clouds indicate many thoughts, while racing thoughts are like clouds drifting rapidly across the sky from a strong wind blowing.

The second metaphor is of thoughts as individual railroad cars on a long train, with each car as a separate thought. Think of observing the train passing at a distance. Sometimes we get caught up in our thoughts and we may suddenly find ourselves on the train. When we realize that we have suddenly hopped on the train, we can then choose to get off the train and return to observing.

With mindfulness, we learn to see thoughts as passing mental events. We learn to detach from and become observers of our thoughts, without identifying with them.

The third metaphor is of thoughts as leaves floating by on a stream that we observe while sitting on the bank of the stream or on a bridge. Each thought can be represented by an individual leaf floating by. Racing thoughts are represented by a fast moving stream.

The fourth metaphor is of thoughts as bubbles rising up from the bottom of a pond.

Participants can choose one of these metaphors for their practise or create their own.

HOME PRACTISE REVIEW

Review how participants' home practise went. If they were able to practise, how was it, and what did they notice? This is also an opportunity for participants to ask questions about the practise.

If participants were not able to practise, what got in the way? Review the common barriers from week two. Participants are encouraged to observe what barriers got in the way, without judgment.

CONNECTION BETWEEN THOUGHTS AND RELAPSE

Group members can consider the following question and statement:

What are thoughts and how do they relate to relapse?

Thoughts are just thoughts and not necessarily facts or the truth of things.

Refer back to session four on mindfulness in high-risk situations and the CAMH Inventory of Gambling Situations ([CAMH-IGS](#)), where we looked at the various thoughts and emotions that can be involved in relapse.

With mindfulness, we learn to see thoughts as passing mental events. We learn to detach from and become observers of our thoughts, without identifying with them. As with the “Walking down the street” exercise in week two, we see how our thoughts can fuel our feelings and emotions and trigger us. This can lead to relapse if not being mindful.

THE RELAPSE PROCESS

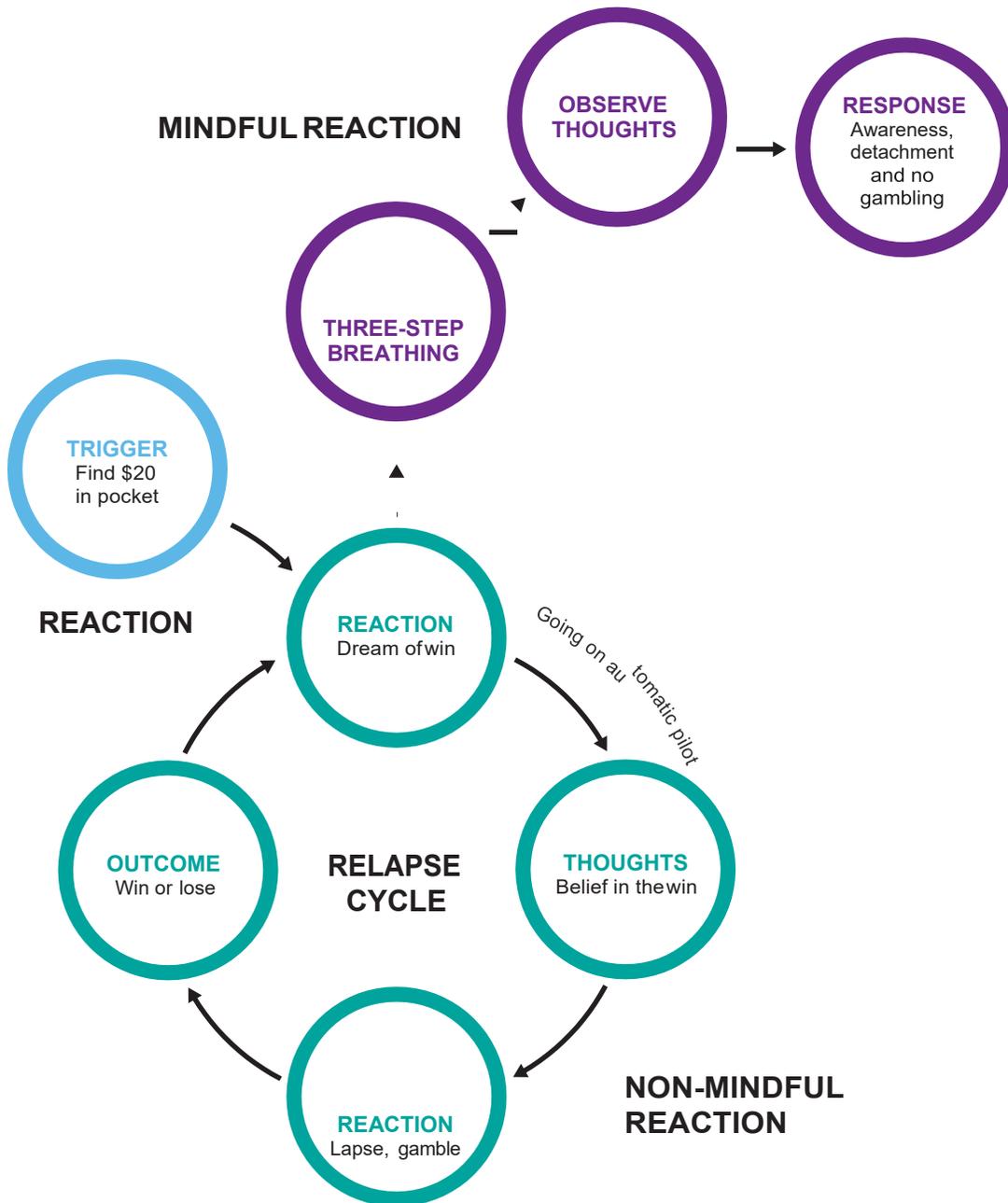
Ask participants to generate examples of specific situations where they might be triggered to gamble, as in one of the CAMH-IGS categories from session four. After recalling such a situation, identify any thoughts and emotions that could be present at the time. Choose one of these examples to walk through with the group on the flipchart after you examine the diagram below.

On the left of the diagram, write down the triggering situation the participant describes. Then write down the thoughts, sensations and emotions that would arise from that situation. Participants can then follow through the chain of events that, on the one hand, leads to gambling or on the other hand, leads to stepping out of automatic pilot and choosing alternative action.

In this example, participants can see how thoughts and emotions are at the core of relapse. It is possible to bring awareness to what is happening and choose to do something else.

RELAPSE PROCESS EXERCISE

Use the flipchart to follow a specific example from the group, illustrating the possible paths of different choices. Highlight the role of thoughts in the relapse process, the possibility of stepping out of automatic pilot and the opportunity to make more conscious choices at any point along the way.



This diagram is based in part on the relapse cycle described by Bowen et al. (2011), but modified for gambling situations based on our own research into relapse with gambling (Turner et al., 2013).

THREE-STEP BREATHING SPACE

Become aware: Become aware of what is happening right now by tuning into your senses, feelings, body sensations and thoughts. What are you seeing? What are you hearing? What sensations are you noticing in your body? What thoughts are arising in the mind?

Breathe: Become aware of your breath as it goes in and out. Notice your chest and belly rising and falling with each breath inhalation and exhalation. What is the quality of your breath? Is it fast, slow, deep or shallow? Just allow breathing to happen without thinking about it.

Body: Become aware of your entire body, expanding your awareness from where you are experiencing breathing. Now that you are more fully in the present moment, how would you respond to this moment?

DEVELOPING YOUR HOME PRACTISE TO PROMOTE CONTINUITY AFTER THE EIGHT WEEKS

Invite participants to choose one or more of the following practises and find ways to weave it into their daily routines:

Mindful eating

Body scan

Mindful walking

Three-step breathing space

Sitting meditation

Mindful stretching or yoga

Participants may sometimes ask, “When is the best time to practise?” Some people may prefer mornings and others may prefer evenings or another time. Sometimes, people may be less inclined to fall asleep when practicing in the morning and others may have more time in the evenings. Regardless of the time of day, ask participants to choose a time that they think they will be most likely to be able to continue the practise, considering long-term over short-term gains.

CLOSING

Ask participants to say their names and one thing they notice in the present moment, indicating thoughts, feelings or body sensations.

MEDITATION SCRIPT FOR FACILITATOR

The facilitator can adapt the script spontaneously as they lead the practise.

Sitting meditation practise: Thoughts

The focus of this sitting meditation is on awareness of thoughts. This involves observing thoughts without judgment, as they come and go, in and out of awareness. The use of metaphors can be helpful for seeing thoughts as passing mental events, rather than getting engaged in the content of the thought.

The first metaphor involves seeing thoughts as clouds floating across the sky. Each cloud represents an individual thought. Many clouds represent many thoughts on your mind, and racing thoughts are represented by thoughts drifting rapidly across the sky, maybe due to a strong wind blowing.

The second metaphor involves seeing thoughts as individual railroad cars on a long train. Observe the train passing by from a distance, recognizing that each thought is a railroad car. Sometimes, we get caught up in our thoughts and we may suddenly find ourselves on the train. When we realize that we have suddenly hopped on the train, we can then choose to get off the train and return to observing.

The third metaphor involves seeing thoughts as leaves floating by on a stream while sitting on the side of the stream or on a bridge. Each thought can be represented by one of the leaves floating by on the stream. Racing thoughts are represented by a fast moving stream.

The fourth metaphor involves seeing each thought as a bubble rising up from the bottom of a pond.

Choose whichever metaphor suits you best for this practise or create one of your own.

Begin by noticing what is happening in the present moment. Close your eyes if you feel comfortable doing so or if you prefer to keep them open, focus your

attention gently downward in front of you. Become present by tuning into your senses and begin by noticing your body sensations. Notice the feeling of your body resting on the chair, feet planted firmly on the ground and your hands resting on your lap.

Now bring your attention to your sense of hearing, noticing sounds. Remember to bring an attitude of curiosity and non-judgment to all of your experience.

Shifting your attention away from sounds, direct your attention to where breathing is happening, in your chest and abdomen. Notice the rise and fall of your chest and abdomen with each breath in and out. Notice the quality of your breath. Is it fast, slow, deep or shallow? We don't have to change our breathing but simply bring awareness to it, as it is happening. Notice that the body knows how to breathe. Whenever the mind gets distracted by something else, acknowledge this and gently bring your attention back to your breath.

Now, tell yourself that it is okay to think and notice any thoughts arising in your awareness, without engaging in the content of the thought. You can use one of the metaphors mentioned above as a way of seeing your thoughts as they come and go. Observe your thoughts as you had observed your breath. Notice that they just come and go without us having to do anything. Maintain an attitude of curiosity and non-judgment as you observe your thoughts arise and fall out of awareness. Some thoughts may be more compelling than others. For these compelling thoughts, bring non-judgmental awareness to them as you breathe into them.

Let go of thinking and bring awareness back to your breath for the final few moments of this practise.

When you are ready, slowly open your eyes.

INQUIRY

Invite participants to comment on their direct experience of this practise.



Handout 1: Session 6

Seeing thoughts as passing mental events

Mindfulness meditation practises encourage us to notice and pay attention to our wandering minds. Mindfulness meditation is based on learning to attend to the present moment and return our focus to our body sensations and breath. Similarly, we can learn to bring awareness to our thoughts intentionally as they come and go. Thoughts are not facts. They are passing mental events. Thoughts can come in the form of images or words that we may or may not choose to believe, similar to the slides on a movie screen. Notice how our thoughts tend to be repetitive and go around in circles.

In this session, we learned how thoughts are involved in the gambling-relapse process.

GAMBLING-RELATED THOUGHTS CAN INCLUDE:

Mindful eating	Body scan
Mindful walking	Three-step breathing space
Sitting meditation	Mindful stretching or yoga

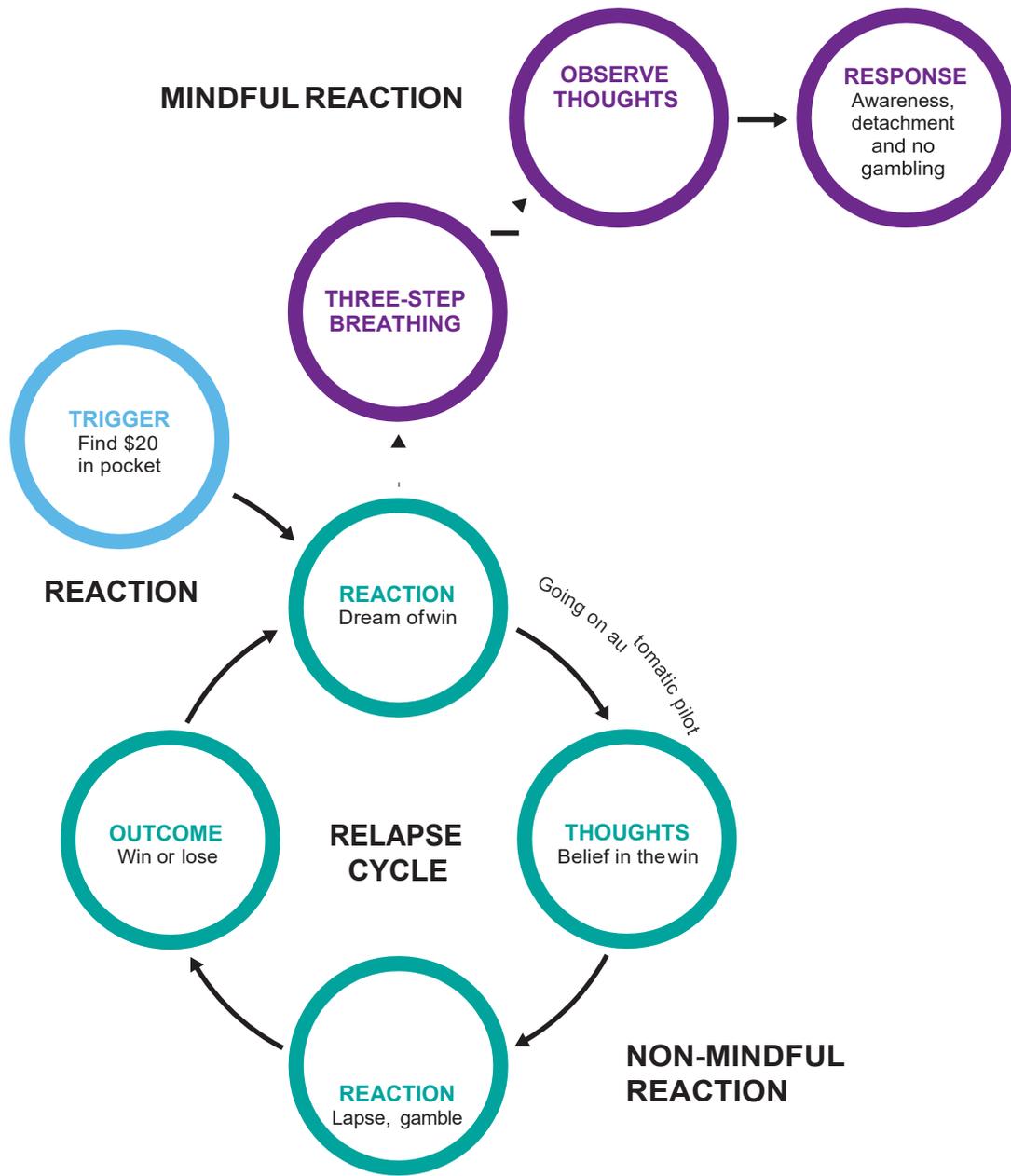
HOME PRACTISE

- 1 Choose one practise that we have learned so far (mindful eating, body scan, sitting meditation, mindful walking, mindful stretching or yoga) and practise it as often as you can.
- 2 Continue to regularly practise the three-step breathing space.



Handout 2: Session 6

Relapse process worksheet



This diagram is based in part on the relapse cycle described by Bowen et al. (2011), but modified for gambling situations based on our own research into relapse with gambling (Turner et al., 2013).



Mindfulness practises encourage us to attend to thoughts, emotions and behaviours that could put us at risk for gambling.



Chapter 11: Session 7

Lesson plan for being good to yourself

Mindfulness practises encourage us to attend to thoughts, emotions and behaviours that could put us at risk for gambling. Participating in activities that we enjoy and receive nourishment from is an aspect of being good to ourselves. Being good to ourselves is important in recovery from gambling problems.

In this session, you will invite participants to consider what aspects of our daily lives are nourishing and what aspects of our lives put us at risk for gambling problems. Living a life that is good for us includes having balance in our lives and compassion for ourselves. Cultivating mindfulness in our daily lives can remind us to take better care of ourselves and be more fulfilled.



AGENDA

Check in

Sitting
meditation:
Loving
kindness

Practise
review

Daily activities
worksheet

The big
picture

Three-step
breathing
space

Home
practise

Closing

CHECK IN

Ask participants to say their names and one thing they notice in the present moment, indicating thoughts, feelings or body sensations.

SITTING MEDITATION: LOVING KINDNESS

This practise is about cultivating loving kindness and compassion for yourself and others. People with addiction problems, including gambling problems, are often very hard on themselves both for having gambled, and for any negative effects gambling has had on their lives.

People can cultivate an attitude of loving kindness and self-compassion. These are both qualities linked to many positive benefits, including increased well-being and positive emotions; decreased chronic pain; increased empathy, altruism, compassion, social connection, acceptance and non-judgment; and decreased self-criticism.

Tell participants that they don't need to have warm, loving feelings when doing this practise: it is more about cultivating good intentions for yourself and others. This practise can change how people relate to pain and suffering. It can also help us to bring more kindness and compassion to ourselves and others when we are going through a difficult time.

As well, this practise is about opening up to the idea of a shared humanity: we are all human and everybody suffers at some point. No one is immune to suffering. We all want to be happy and no one is perfect.

We need to first cultivate loving kindness and compassion toward ourselves because being kind to ourselves makes it easier to have loving kindness for others. Then we cultivate loving kindness for someone that we respect and admire, such as a mentor or spiritual advisor. After that, we cultivate loving kindness to a friend or someone neutral and then, finally, to someone that we find challenging.

PRACTISE REVIEW

Review how their home practise went. If they were able to practise, how was it and what did they notice? This is also an opportunity for participants to ask questions about the practise.

If participants were not able to practise, what got in the way? Review the common challenges from week two. Participants are encouraged to observe what challenges got in the way, without judgment.

Cultivating mindfulness in our daily lives can remind us to take better care of ourselves and be more fulfilled.

DAILY ACTIVITIES WORKSHEET

Invite participants to complete this worksheet and to comment on what it was like.

Before they start, remind them that depleting activities are activities that someone might not like doing and that tend to drain their energy, such as taking out the trash or waiting in line or in traffic. Nourishing activities, on the other hand, are activities that someone might like doing and that tend to energize or uplift them, such as taking a bath or having lunch with a best friend.

Elicit responses from group participants on the following questions:

Did anyone realize how many depleting activities there were in their day?

Was there an equal balance of both nourishing and depleting activities?

Was there anything that they can do to lessen the impact of these depleting activities, such as decreasing the amount of such activities, changing something to make them less depleting or changing their attitudes toward them?

Keep in mind that something one person might find depleting, another person might find nourishing or neutral.

With a change in perspective, an activity that someone might have found depleting may start to feel nourishing.

THE BIG PICTURE

In previous sessions, we looked at specific triggers to relapse, such as conflict with someone or worry about debts (as described in the CAMH-IGS). We now switch to looking at the big picture, which is the person's entire life situation, including any lifestyle changes they have made. How would participants know that they might be heading down a slippery slope? One example may be when they find themselves withdrawing from others.

The acronym H.A.L.T. is a commonly used by mutual aid groups in discussions of triggers and relapse prevention, and it stands for hungry, angry, lonely, and tired. It is based on the content of four chapters from the Alcoholics Anonymous publication *Living Sober* (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1975). It is a great way to monitor self-care when in recovery such as for substance use or gambling.

The acronym stands for:

Hungry: Are your physical and nutritional needs being taken care of?

Angry: Are your emotional needs being taken care of?

Lonely: Are your social and relational needs being taken care of?

Tired: Are you getting enough rest and rejuvenation?

If someone is lacking in any of these areas, they would need to tend to their needs in order to not be vulnerable to triggers. This is a way for someone to monitor their basic self-care needs. Practising being mindful may allow someone to slow down and pay attention to their mind and body and not get too stressed out.

Three-step breathing space

Become aware: Become aware of what is happening right now by tuning into your senses, feelings, body sensations and thoughts. What are you seeing? What are you hearing? What sensations are you noticing in your body? What thoughts are arising in the mind?

Breathe: Become aware of your breath as it goes in and out. Notice your chest and belly rising and falling with each inhalation and exhalation. What is the quality of your breath? Is it fast, slow, deep or shallow? Just allow breathing to happen all on its own.

Body: Become aware of your entire body, expanding your awareness from where you are experiencing breathing. Now that you are more fully in the present moment, how would you respond to this moment?

HOME PRACTISE

Distribute handouts to participants. Home practise will include sitting meditation and the three-step breathing space.

CLOSING

Ask participants to say their names and one thing they notice in the present moment, indicating thoughts, feelings or body sensations.

MEDITATION SCRIPT FOR FACILITATOR

The facilitator can adapt the script spontaneously as they lead the practise.

Loving kindness meditation

Allow yourself to settle into the present moment and sit comfortably in your chair.

Posture is important during meditation practise. Adopt a posture that denotes wakefulness and comfort. Keep your back straight but not stiff. Uncross your legs and arms to allow the energy to flow freely through your body. You may want to sit with your back away from the backrest of the chair, so that it is self-supporting and can promote a sense of wakefulness.

Notice what is happening right now, in terms of thoughts, feelings or body sensations.

Notice the sensations of your body resting on the chair and feet planted firmly on the ground. You may close your eyes if you feel comfortable doing so. If you prefer to keep your eyes open, focus gently downward, a few feet in front of you.

Bring your attention to the sense of hearing, noticing sounds. Notice the quality of sounds. Notice at what point your hearing and the sound intersect.

Try to stay with the experience of hearing without thinking about what you are hearing.

Leaving hearing in the background, now bring your attention to the breath. Notice where in your body you are experiencing breathing: the chest, belly, nostrils. Notice the chest and belly as they rise and fall with each inhalation and exhalation.

Notice that the body knows how to breathe. There is nothing that you need to do except to just allow it to happen.

Notice the quality of the breath. Is it fast, slow, deep or shallow?

Notice, with curiosity, when the mind has wandered away from the breath. Maybe the mind was drawn to thoughts, feelings or body sensations. This is normal and often happens. It is what the mind does. If you noticed that thinking was happening, just label it as “thinking” and gently bring your attention back to the breath, without judgment.

Loving kindness meditation is primarily about connecting to the intention of wishing ourselves or others happiness.

Now bring to mind someone that you look up to and have positive feelings toward. It could be someone that is like a mentor or spiritual advisor, teacher or guide. Notice any feelings that come up as you bring this person to mind.

Bring your attention to the area around your heart and notice any sensations there, if any.

Now imagine yourself sending well wishes to this person, using the following statements:

May you be safe.
May you be happy.
May you be healthy.
May you live with ease.

Repeat these statements a few times. Then imagine this person sending well wishes back to you:

May you be safe.
May you be happy.
May you be healthy.
May you live with ease.

Repeat these statements a few times.

Now offer these well wishes to yourself:

May I be safe.
May I be happy.
May I be healthy.
May I live with ease.

Repeat these statements a few times.

Now offer these well wishes to everyone in the group. Eventually, you can offer these well wishes to everyone on the planet.

Bring your attention back to your breath and when ready, gently open your eyes.



Handout 1: Session 7

Being good to yourself

Mindfulness practises encourage us to attend to thoughts, emotions and behaviours that could put us at risk for gambling. Participating in activities that we enjoy and that provide nourishment to us is an aspect of being good to ourselves. Self-care is crucial in recovery from gambling problems.

This session allowed us to consider what aspects of our daily lives are nourishing and what aspects of our lives put us at risk for gambling problems. Living a life that is good for us includes having a balance of work, leisure, community, spirituality, family and any other elements that are important to us. A good life also involves having compassion for ourselves. Cultivating mindfulness in our daily lives can remind us to take better care of ourselves and recognize what we need to do in our lives to feel fulfilled.

HOME PRACTISE

- 1 Choose a practise that we have learned that you like to do (e.g., three-step breathing space, body scan, mindful walking, sitting meditation, mindful eating) and find a time in your weekly schedule to practise it regularly.
- 2 Participate in at least three activities that you find nourishing.



Handout 2: Session 7

Daily activities worksheet

List situations that you encounter in your daily activities, such as taking a shower, having breakfast, driving to work, going to meetings, having dinner, doing laundry, washing dishes and taking public transportation. Some of these activities may be enjoyable, while others may be unpleasant and others may be neutral. Some situations may increase your chance of relapse, but others may strengthen you. In the second column, check off whether that situation makes you feel depleted (or worn down) or if it makes you feel uplifted (or gives you energy and improves your mood). If discussing people, to protect people's privacy, do not use their full names or use pseudonyms.

CHECK OFF IF IT DEPLETED YOU OR UPLIFTED YOU.		
Situations (activity, person, place)	Deplete	Uplift
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Based on Bowen et al. (2011), Segal et al. (2002), as well as our own research into relapse situations (Turner et al., 2013).

**Regular mindfulness
practise enables
us greater freedom
because we can learn
to be more aware and
less reactive in our lives.**



Chapter 12: Session 8

Lesson plan for maintaining practise after group ends

Over the past eight weeks, you have practiced mindfulness skills alongside your participants that they can use in daily life. You have also reviewed risk factors for relapse into gambling and other behaviours, while learning to live a balanced lifestyle.

Mindfulness enables us to fully accept our experiences in the present moment and to make choices from a wiser and clearer stance. It is not easy to incorporate these practises into our lives but we need to develop patience and compassion for ourselves.

Participation in a group provides support and a network of people interested in recovery from gambling problems and in learning mindfulness practise. When we have a support network, we have people in our lives who can make us aware of relapse triggers and who can encourage us to maintain our practise.



AGENDA

Check in

Body scan or sitting meditation – Read “Paradox of Noise” at the end of the meditation

Practise review

Connecting with resources in the community

Course evaluation

Review goals from session one

Concluding meditation

Through a mindfulness practise, we come to recognize that there are some things in our lives that we can control and other things that we cannot. Regular mindfulness practise enables us greater freedom because we can learn to be more aware and less reactive in our lives. While difficulties and challenges will arrive with these practises, practising in itself is a sign of growth. We can learn to be gentle with ourselves and to cultivate an acceptance of who we are at each moment in time.

CHECK IN

Ask participants to say their names and one thing they notice in the present moment, indicating thoughts, feelings or body sensations.

BODY SCAN OR SITTING MEDITATION

We return to the body scan as a way to complete the circle of practise and provide participants with one more opportunity to do this practise. Participants can then compare this practise with the first one in session one to look at what might have changed for them.

The body scan is an opportunity for participants to pay attention to something that is not necessarily interesting and may even be boring at times. Keeping with the spirit of the practise, they can notice how they react to bringing their attention to something that can be boring and the common reaction to want to push it away or make it interesting. Boredom is a common reason cited by people with gambling problems for relapse.

Following the meditation practise, you can read the poem “Paradox of Noise,” which can be a wonderful way of depicting the nature of meditation.

PRACTISE REVIEW

Review how their home practise went. If they were able to practise, how was it and what did they notice? This is also an opportunity for participants to ask questions about the practise.

If participants were not able to practise, what got in the way? Review the common barriers from week two. Encourage participants to observe, without judgment, what barriers got in the way.

When we have support in our lives, we can more easily become aware of triggers for relapse early on, through our social support networks.

CONNECTING WITH RESOURCES IN THE COMMUNITY

How do participants stay connected to the practise and to the experience of the present moment? It is easy to forget this practise once the group has ended. Many resources are available online and in the community, including future groups. Interest in mindfulness meditation has grown exponentially over the years. Staying connected is not just about connecting to others with similar interests, but also connecting to yourself and your inner experience.

COURSE EVALUATION

Invite participants to complete the questionnaire found at the end of this manual and, if they feel comfortable, to share anything that came up for them while doing so.

REVIEW GOALS FROM SESSION ONE

Revisit the goals that the group came up with in session one to remind participants of the reasons they joined the group. These goals can reinforce their motivations for continuing the practise and help them see how they have benefitted from the group.

CONCLUDING MEDITATION

Participants can be given an opportunity to reflect on the past eight weeks meditating with each other and provide each other with feedback and well wishes moving forward.

Even though this is not a process-oriented group and discussions are mostly centred on direct experience of the practise, these groups still seem to connect members quite well. There is something about meditating together that can be quite intimate, not unlike the connectedness that can be achieved through a process group.

MEDITATION SCRIPT FOR FACILITATOR

The facilitator can adapt the script spontaneously as they lead the practise.

Concluding meditation practise

Sit comfortably in your chair. Close your eyes if you feel comfortable doing so or keep them open and focused gently downward.

Notice what is happening right now by tuning into the senses: hearing, body sensations, thoughts and emotions.

Bring your attention to the sensations of the breath in the body.

Reflect on the past eight weeks together with the other group members and your experience of meditating together in this group.

As in the loving kindness meditation practise, send each of the group members well wishes:

May you be safe.
May you be happy.
May you be healthy.
May you live with ease.

Now send well wishes back to yourself.

May I be safe.
May I be happy.
May I be healthy.
May I live with ease.

In the remaining few minutes, bring your attention back to the breath.

When you are ready, gently open your eyes.



Handout 1: Session 8

Maintaining practise after group ends

Over the past eight weeks, we have learned mindfulness skills that we can use in daily life. Mindfulness enables us to fully accept our experiences in the present moment and to make choices from a wiser and clearer stance. It is not easy to incorporate these practises into our lives, but we need to develop patience and compassion for ourselves.

We have reviewed risk factors for relapse into gambling and other behaviours, while learning to live a balanced lifestyle.

Participation in a group provides support and a network of people interested in recovery from gambling problems and in learning mindfulness practise. Our social support networks help us to more easily become aware of triggers for relapse early on and maintain our practise: they act like mirrors, pointing out things to us that we may not be able to see ourselves.

With mindful practise, we come to recognize that there are some things in our lives that we can control and other things that we cannot. Regular mindfulness practise enables us greater freedom because we can learn to be more aware and less reactive in our lives. While difficulties and challenges will arrive with these practises, practising in itself is a sign of growth. We can learn to be gentle with ourselves and to cultivate an acceptance of who we are at each moment in time.



Handout 2: Session 8

Paradox of Noise

It is a paradox that we encounter so much internal noise when we first try to sit in silence.

It is a paradox that experiencing pain releases pain.

It is a paradox that keeping still can lead us so fully into life and being.

Our minds do not like paradoxes. We want things to be clear, so we can maintain our illusions of safety. Certainty breeds tremendous smugness.

We each possess a deeper level of being, however, which loves paradox. It knows that summer is already growing like a seed in the depth of winter. It knows that the moment we are born, we begin to die. It knows that all of life shimmers, in shades of becoming—that shadow and light are always together, the visible mingled with the invisible.

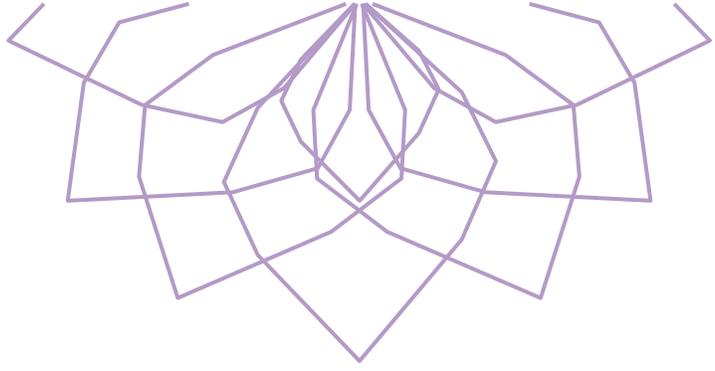
When we sit in stillness we are profoundly active. Keeping silent, we hear the roar of existence. Through our willingness to be the one we are, we become one with everything.

Gunilla Norris

From *Inviting Silence. Universal Principles of Meditation* (p. 69–70), 2004. Blue Ridge. Copyright 2004. Reprinted with permission from Gunilla Norris.



**Happiness is not the
absence of suffering,
but the ability to
live your life amidst
whatever suffering
might be present,
because suffering
is a part of life.**



Chapter 13

Concluding remarks

Mindfulness training has increasingly been integrated into clinical practise. Being more fully present in our lives can help us deal with life issues that come our way, and mindfulness can be equated with being present in life:.

To have doubt about mindfulness, of the value and importance of just being mindful, borders on having doubt about the value of being present for life in general, because mindfulness and being present for life is the same thing (Fronsdal, 2016, p. 7).

When we first piloted mindfulness groups at CAMH's Problem Gambling Service, we did not know what to expect, but the group was immediately well accepted and the clients asked for more. This encouraged us to continue providing these groups to the clients

with gambling problems.

Clients learned that there was another way of being, rather than using automatic pilot and avoidance. They learned to be present in their lives, to face pain and suffering and to recognize that the energy and mindset it takes to avoid pain and suffering prevents us from experiencing whatever joy and happiness might be emerging. Happiness is not the absence of suffering, but the ability to live your life amidst whatever suffering might be present, because suffering is a part of life. It is unavoidable. Happiness is having the spaciousness to hold everything, the good and the bad. Clients also learned to be more compassionate and understanding of themselves and of others.

It continues to be a joy running these groups and to observe clients' transformation in the mindfulness program.

Please see the pages following for a list of references, and then the appendices. In Appendix 1, we have provided a resource list with additional information about mindfulness. Appendix 2 contains an evaluation survey that you may find useful for obtaining feedback from your clients and to then making modifications for future groups.



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Appendix 1

Resources

WEBSITES

Audio Dharma: An archive of mindfulness teachings by Gil Fronsdal, Andrea Fella and various guest speakers at the Insight Meditation Center in Redwood City, CA.
www.audiodharma.org

Dharma Seed: Downloadable meditation teachings and instruction www.dharmaseed.org

Buddhist Recovery Network: Links and articles relevant to meditation and recovery:
www.buddhistrecovery.org

The Mindfulness Solution: Downloadable meditations by Ronald D. Siegel, PsyD <http://mindfulness-solution.com/DownloadMeditations.html>

BOOKS

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8 Check off which of the following practises that you think you will continue to use at home after this course?

Body scan

Sitting meditation

Mindful stretching/yoga

Three-step breathing space

Mindful eating

Mindful walking

9 Other comments:

camh

Gambling, Gaming
and Technology
Use-Knowledge
Exchange

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