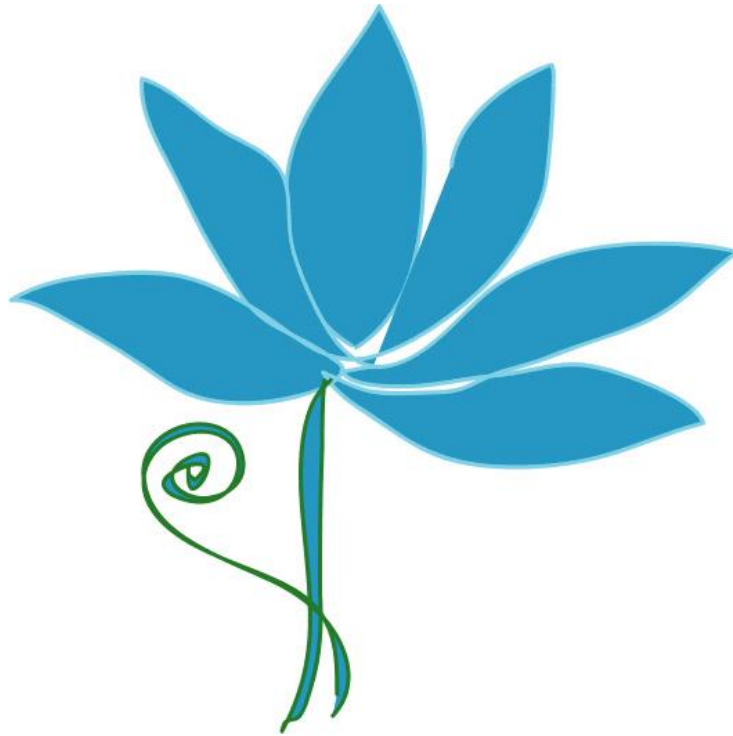




The New Haven Wellness Path  
for Youth and Their Parents  
along with our Staff Members

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A great Vietnamese philosopher monk once said, “No Mud... No Lotus.” So just like a beautiful and fragrant lotus blossom grows in the thick black mud of a pond, so we can use the challenges in our life to feed the happiness and joy. Those of us who have lived difficult lives with lots of challenges may find that it is those very challenges that will help us learn compassion for others and compassion is the key to mindfulness and mindfulness is the key to wellness.

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## Background Information

### Purpose

*The New Haven Wellness Path* was developed to assist our staff members along with our youth and their families develop a wellness practice to help them find a happier and more balanced life. *The New Haven Wellness Path* is based upon the principles of “mindfulness.” The practices of mindfulness are being used in schools, hospitals, prisons, homes, and corporations to develop higher levels of well-being in people and ultimately contribute to healthier, happier, and more compassionate people, families, communities, nations, and a safer world.

### Audiences

The target audience for *The New Haven Wellness Path* is the youth we serve. We have a great deal of respect and admiration for our youth who are working to be successful at home, at school, and in their communities. We know that adolescence is a very difficult time for any youth, but it may be even more difficult for the youth we serve due to the disruption caused by the very services we provide to help them. We hope as our youth walk their personal wellness path, that they will find the information and exercises in this workbook helpful, supportive, and reassuring.

At the same time, while this workbook is designed for our youth, we are making it available to the family of our youth so they can understand the wellness program at New Haven, support their youth’s movement through the program, and maybe some family members might like to use the workbook to develop or support their own personal wellness program.

We also provide this workbook to the New Haven workforce. It is our belief that our ability to help youth develop and live their wellness path is limited unless our staff members are practicing their own personal wellness plan. The information on wellness can help our staff members walk their wellness path and ultimately serve as a resource, guide, and “cheerleader” for our youth.

### A Working Definition of “Wellness”

The Merriam-Webster On-Line Dictionary defines Wellness as “the quality or state of being in good health especially as an actively sought goal.” So wellness is about being intentionally becoming healthy. One interesting thing about wellness is that is beyond simply not being sick or ill; rather, is about creating lifestyles that create health in our life.

The National Wellness Institute’s co-founder, Dr. Bill Hettler, created a model for wellness commonly referred to as the Six Dimensions of Wellness<sup>1</sup>:

1. Physical
2. Social
3. Intellectual
4. Spiritual
5. Emotional
6. Occupational

1. **Physical Wellness Dimension** – The physical dimension recognizes the need for regular physical activity. Physical development encourages learning about diet and nutrition while discouraging use of tobacco, drugs, and excessive alcohol consumption. Optimal wellness is met through the combination of good exercise and eating habits. As you travel your wellness path, you'll strive to spend time building physical strength, flexibility, and endurance while also taking safety precautions so you may travel your path successfully, including medical self-care and appropriate use of a medical system. The physical dimension of wellness entails personal responsibility and care for minor illnesses and also knowing when professional medical attention is needed. By traveling the wellness path, you'll be able to monitor your own vital signs and understand your body's warning signs. You'll understand and appreciate the relationship between sound nutrition and how your body performs. The physical benefits of looking good and feeling terrific most often lead to the psychological benefits of enhanced self-esteem, self-control, determination and a sense of direction.

Physical wellness follows these tenets:

- a. It is better to consume foods and beverages that enhance good health rather than those which impair it.
  - b. It is better to be physically fit than out of shape
- 
2. **Social Wellness Dimension**– The social dimension encourages contributing to one's environment and community. It emphasizes the interdependence between others and nature. As you travel a wellness path, you'll become more aware of your importance in society as well as the impact you have on multiple environments. You'll take an active part in improving our world by encouraging healthier living and initiating better communication with those around you. You'll actively seek ways to preserve the beauty and balance of nature along the pathway you discover the power make willful choices to enhance personal relationships and important friendships, and build a better living space and community.

Social wellness follows these tenets:

- a. It is better to contribute to the common welfare of our community than to think only of ourselves.
  - b. It is better to live in harmony with others and our environment than to live in conflict with them.
- 
3. **Intellectual Wellness Dimension**– The intellectual dimension recognizes one's creative, stimulating mental activities. A well person expands his or her knowledge and skills while discovering the potential for sharing his or her gifts with others. Using intellectual and cultural activities in the classroom and beyond the classroom combined with the human resources and learning resources available in school and the larger community, a well person cherishes intellectual growth and stimulation. Traveling a wellness path, you'll explore issues related to problem solving, creativity, and learning. You'll spend more time pursuing personal interests and reading books, magazines, and newspapers, while keeping abreast of current issues and ideas. As you develop your intellectual

curiosity, you'll actively strive to expand and challenge your mind with creative endeavors.

Intellectual wellness follows these tenets:

- a. It is better to stretch and challenge our minds with intellectual and creative pursuits than to become self-satisfied and unproductive.
  - b. It is better to identify potential problems and choose appropriate courses of action based on available information than to wait, worry, and contend with major concerns later.
4. Spiritual Wellness Dimension- The spiritual dimension recognizes our search for meaning and purpose in human existence. It includes the development of a deep appreciation for the depth and expanse of life and natural forces that exist in the universe. Your search will be characterized by peaceful harmony between internal personal feelings and emotions and the rough and rugged stretches of your path. While traveling the path, you may experience many feelings of doubt, despair, fear, disappointment, and dislocation, as well as feelings of pleasure, joy, happiness, and discovery. These are all important experiences and components to your search and will be displayed in the value system you will adapt to bring meaning to your existence. You'll know you're becoming spiritually well when your actions become more consistent with your beliefs and values, resulting in a "world view."

Spiritual wellness follows these tenets:

- a. It is better to ponder the meaning of life for ourselves and to be tolerant of the beliefs of others than to close our minds and become intolerant.
  - b. It is better to live each day in a way that is consistent with our values and beliefs than to do otherwise and feel untrue to ourselves.
5. Emotional Wellness Dimension-The emotional dimension recognizes awareness and acceptance of one's feelings. Emotional wellness includes the degree to which one feels positive and enthusiastic about one's self and life. It includes the capacity to manage one's feelings and related behaviors including the realistic assessment of one's limitations, development of autonomy, and ability to cope effectively with stress. The well person maintains satisfying relationships with others. Awareness of and accepting a wide range of feelings in yourself and others is essential to wellness. On the wellness path, you'll be able to express feelings freely and manage feelings effectively. You'll be able to arrive at personal choices and decisions based upon the synthesis of feelings, thoughts, philosophies, and behavior. You'll live and work independently while realizing the importance of seeking and appreciating the support and assistance of others. You'll be able to form interdependent relationships with others based upon a foundation of mutual commitment, trust, and respect. You'll take on challenges, take risks, and recognize conflict as being potentially healthy. Managing your life in personally rewarding ways, and taking responsibility for your actions, will help you see life as an exciting, hopeful adventure.

Emotional wellness follows these tenets:

- a. It is better to be aware of and accept our feeling than to deny them.

- b. It is better to be optimistic in our approach to life than pessimistic.
6. Occupational Wellness Dimension- The occupational dimension recognizes personal satisfaction and enrichment in one's life through work. At the center of occupational wellness is the premise that occupational development is related to one's attitude about one's work. Traveling a path toward your occupational wellness, you contribute your unique gifts, skills, and talents to work that is both personally meaningful and rewarding. You'll convey your values through your involvement in activities that are gratifying to you. The choice of profession, job satisfaction, career ambitions, and personal performance are all important components of your path's terrain.

Occupational wellness follows these tenets:

- a. It is better to choose a career which is consistent with our personal values, interests, and beliefs than to select one that is unrewarding to us.
- b. It is better to develop functional, transferable skills through structured involvement opportunities than to remain inactive and uninvolved.<sup>ii</sup>



### Open Mind/ Open Heart

Whenever attempting a new activity or practice, it is recommended that you approach the new activity with an open mind and open heart. A new behavior can sometimes trigger thoughts in us like, "I look silly!" ; "People will laugh at me if they saw me doing this." , or "This isn't for me." If you expect these thoughts to arise in you, take some time to look at those thoughts. Oftentimes, our mind will start giving us messages like "too silly," "too weird," or "not for me" as a way to protect us and keep us in the status quo – even when the status quo is painful or unhealthy.



We suggest you take some time to let your mind know that it does not need to be quite so protective right now. That this “wellness stuff” is something you are experimenting with to see if you can feel calmer, safer, and better protected.

We also suggest that you check in with your emotional center – your heart. Let your heart know that you are not trying to destroy eliminate feelings in your life. Rather, let your heart know that you are practicing mindful wellness to help strengthen and develop feelings of love, compassion, and well-being. Your more difficult emotions like anger, jealousy, or hate will not be “destroyed” but through the practices of mindful wellness, difficult emotions may not rule so much of your life in the future.

In order to allow the maximum growth possible through mindful wellness we need to pay attention to our thoughts and feelings. Our goal is work together with our thoughts and feelings to find more balance in our life and in order to do this we need to care for our mind, our body, and emotions and practice to keep an open mind and open heart.

### The New Haven Treatment Programs

New Haven provides services to youth in our residential, school, and out-patient programs. Our mindfulness model is integrated with and augments our cognitive behavioral, trauma informed practices in our programs. While mindful wellness is not therapy, it is therapeutic. Mindful wellness can be used to reinforce the therapies provided and help our youth feel less stressful, calmer, and happier as they participate in the difficult work of therapy. Many of our treatment staff use mindful wellness to help them find peace and calm in their very busy and complex lives.

Mindful wellness is not something that we “do to” our youth, but mindful wellness is something we “do with” them.

### An Introduction to Mindfulness

Mindfulness practice is an evidence-based practice to assist with wellbeing<sup>iii iv v</sup>, mental health<sup>vi vii viii ix</sup>, and physical health<sup>x xi xii xiii</sup>. Mindfulness is wonderful model for wellness because it is based upon the belief that you have everything you need to be happy available to you right now. You do not need to go out and buy a new yoga mat or new book. You do not need to force yourself to become vegetarian or vegan. Mindfulness is not a religion; rather, it is a philosophy or way of life.

Mindfulness practice begins where you are at mentally, physically, emotionally, and even spiritually. The Wellness model of mindfulness presented in *The New Haven Wellness Path* is based upon the works and teachings of a Vietnamese teacher known as Thich Nhat Hanh (Tick Not Han). Thich Nhat Hanh brought mindfulness practice to the United States in the 1960s, in fact, he, was nominated by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. for the Nobel Peace Prize for his work on non-violence.

Here are some things that Thich Nhat Hanh teaches about mindfulness.



1. Mindfulness is simple – be aware of where you are, what you are doing, and the world around you (without judging, criticizing, or trying to change any part of the experience.)

**simple is  
beautiful.**



2. Mindfulness is something that doesn't just happen in a classroom or meditation room, but mindfulness is something we can practice all day long.



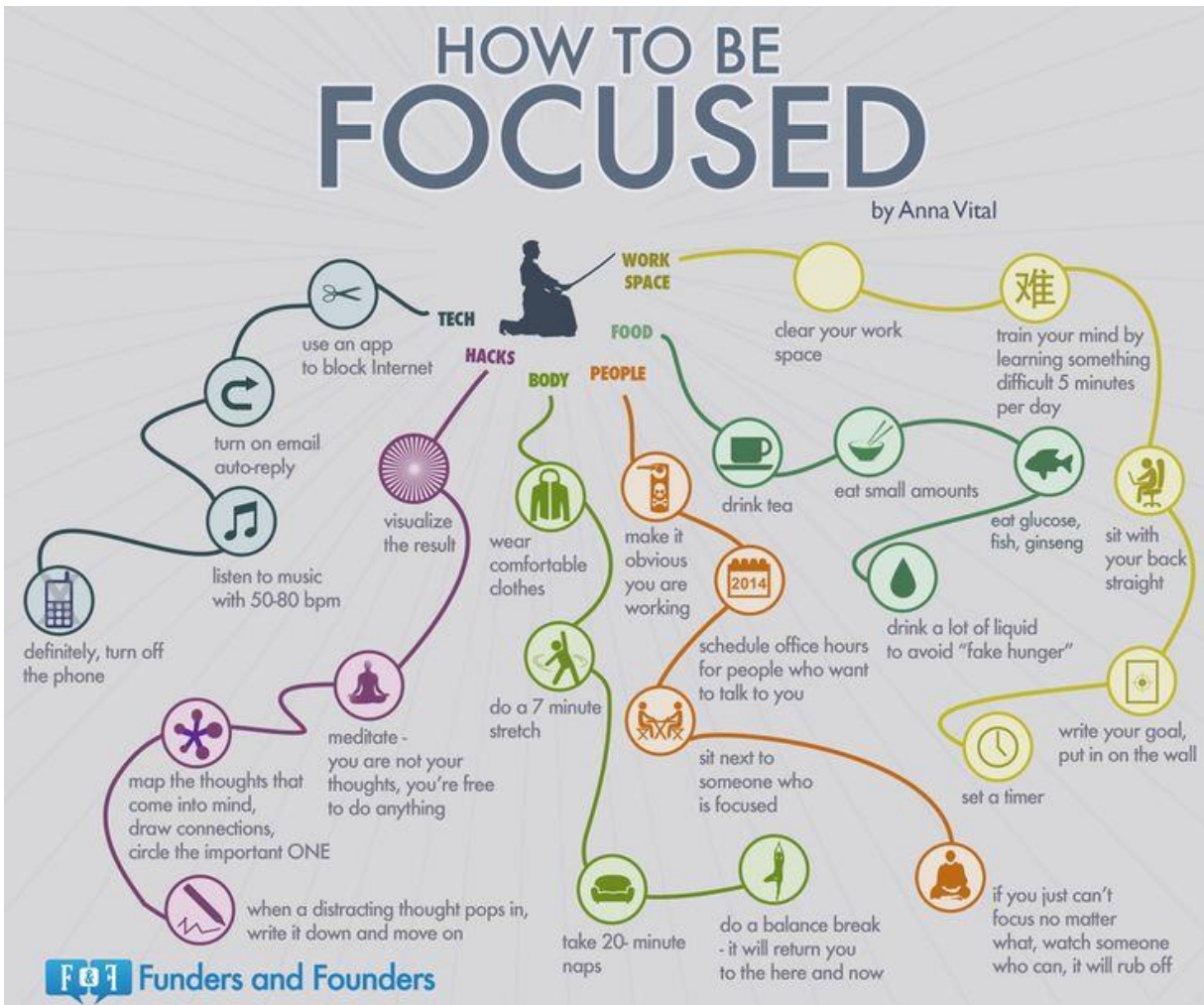
3. When we practice mindfulness with others who will support our practice – mindfulness even more joyful, relaxed, and steady.

4. Oh, by the way, did you notice that mindfulness should be joyful? Mindfulness brings happiness and lightness – it does not need to be heavy, serious, or painful.



5. Mindfulness is always about being mindful of some “thing”. We can't walk around and say, “I am being mindful.” Rather, there needs to be an object of your mindfulness, such as “I am mindful of my breathing.”, “I am mindful of the cool breeze.”, or “I am mindful of my anger.” Mindfulness is not about some state of consciousness disconnected from the world around you, but mindfulness

is about focused and non-judgmental awareness of our self and the world we live in.



- Mindfulness is unique to each person so we are asked to be inquisitive and open to the experience. No one is able to tell you what your mindfulness experience will be, but those who are practicing mindfulness can help you by teaching practice techniques and support you by encouraging your own development.



## Wellness Self-Assessment

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer these questions to the best of your ability and as honestly as possible. This assessment is not about being “right” or “wrong.” This assessment is designed to simply help you gain a better understanding of how satisfied you are with the six wellness dimensions of your life.

During the last month, on an average, how satisfied are you with each wellness dimension in your own life? Please circle the number that best identifies your level of satisfaction.

### A. Physical Wellness

1. Very unsatisfied	2. Unsatisfied	3. Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	4. Satisfied	5. Very satisfied	0. I don't want to answer
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### B. Social Wellness

1. Very unsatisfied	2. Unsatisfied	3. Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	4. Satisfied	5. Very satisfied	0. I don't want to answer
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### C. Intellectual Wellness

1. Very unsatisfied	2. Unsatisfied	3. Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	4. Satisfied	5. Very satisfied	0. I don't want to answer
---------------------------	-------------------	---	-----------------	----------------------	---------------------------------

### D. Spiritual Wellness

1. Very unsatisfied	2. Unsatisfied	3. Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	4. Satisfied	5. Very satisfied	0. I don't want to answer
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### E. Emotional Wellness

1. Very unsatisfied	2. Unsatisfied	3. Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	4. Satisfied	5. Very satisfied	0. I don't want to answer
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### F. Occupational Wellness

1. Very unsatisfied	2. Unsatisfied	3. Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	4. Satisfied	5. Very satisfied	0. I don't want to answer
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Total score: \_\_\_\_\_

You can write any comments about your wellness satisfaction on the back of this form

## Exercises

The exercises provided are offered in a sequence that builds one exercise upon the next. It is recommended that the first time through the exercises you start at Exercise 1 and move through the subsequent exercises in the order presented. Participants should feel free to repeat exercises as often as useful. After moving through all exercises, you should practice those exercises that are the most useful to you. But please remember, that even though you may have practiced an exercise many, many times – there is always an opportunity to learn something new if you approach the exercise with an open mind and open heart.

## 1. Mindful Breathing Exercise 1 (Body)

Let's start with our first mindful wellness exercise. It is surprisingly simple, but our first exercise is simply to become aware of the in and the out of your breath.



Okay, let's try this, without trying to change how deeply you are breathing or how fast you are breathing – in fact, without trying to change any characteristic of your breathing simply sit quietly and become aware of 3 cycles of the in and out of your breath.

1. Breathe in
2. Breathe out
3. Breathe in
4. Breathe out
5. Breathe in
6. Breathe out

Fairly simple right?

What did you notice about your breath?

Don't judge your breathing by saying things like, "I breath too fast!" or "I breath too slow!" or "I wish I could breathe more deeply."

For the time being try to allow that judging part of your brain go to sleep and simply observe your breath.

Did you notice other things about your body when you focused on your breath? Let's try mindful breathing again – this time for a little bit longer. And simply pay attention to your body as you mindfully breath.

Breathe in

Breathe out

Breathe in

Breathe out

Breathe in... I am aware of my body

Breathe out... I do not need to judge my body

Breathe in... aware of my body

Breathe out... no judgement of my body

Breathe in... aware

Breathe out... no judgement

Breathe in

Breathe out

Now slowly return your awareness to the room.

Take a moment or two and write down one or two things that you noticed about your body. Try to avoid “judging” words if at all possible.

In mindfulness, focusing on breathing is one of the most important exercises. When you get stressed or tired or angry or sad— focus on your breath.

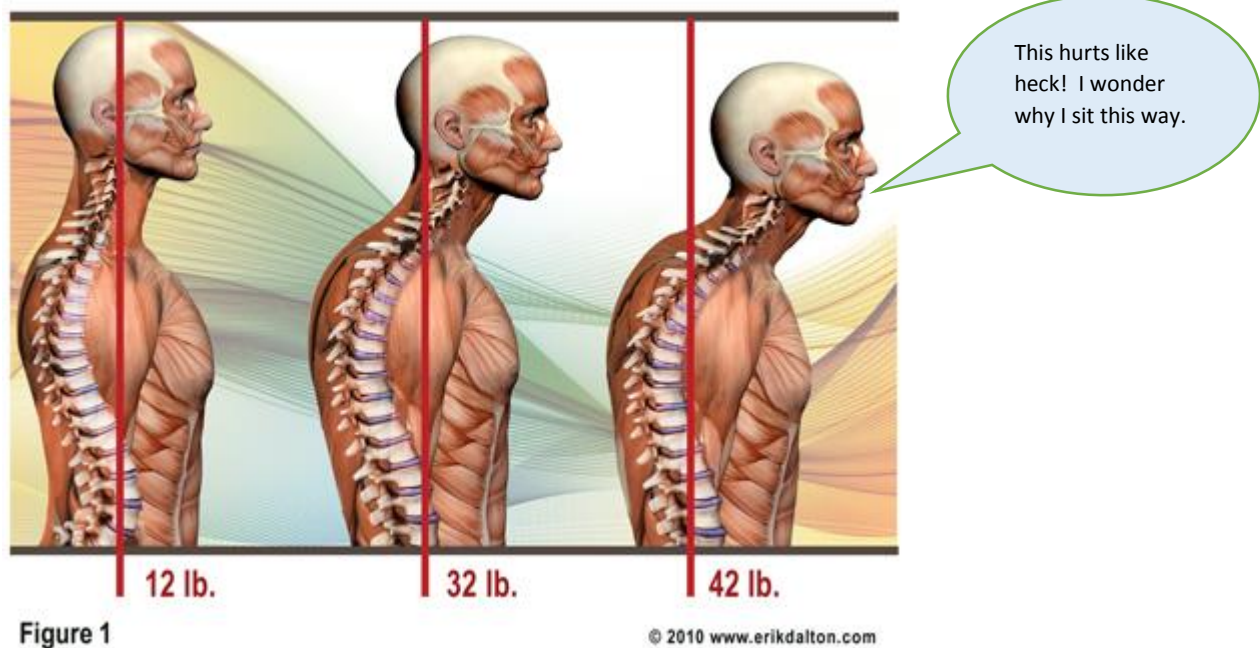


## 2. Mindful Breathing Exercise 2 (Mind)

We are going to practice mindful breathing again. Let's build on what we learned last time and spend a few more minutes on preparation before we mindfully breathe.

Get your body into a comfortable position. You may find it helpful to uncross your arms and legs. Trying sitting on laying in a position that is comfortable to your body. Some people who sit mindfully like to image their spine is a stack of quarters – now imagine you are aligning that stack of quarters with a slight curve toward your stomach at the bottom and a slight curve in your spine toward your back in the chest area.

Figure 1 below shows that when you have a healthy spinal alignment while you sit your muscles only have to expend the least amount of energy to hold your head erect. If you slouch, you can see that it takes more energy to simply hold your head erect. This may be one reason that you may have shoulder or neck pain.



Okay now that your body is better cared for let's refocus on our breath.

Breathe in

Breathe out

Breathe in

Breathe out

Breathe in... I am aware of my body

Breathe out... I do not need to judge my body

Breathe in... aware of my body

Breathe out... no judgement of my body

Breathe in... aware

Breathe out... no judgement

Breathe in... I am aware of my mind

Breathe out... I do not need to judge my mind

Breathe in... aware of my mind

Breathe out... no judgement of my mind

Breathe in... aware

Breathe out... no judgement

Breathe in

Breathe out

Now slowly return your awareness to the room.

Take a moment or two and write down one or two things that you noticed about your mind. Try to avoid “judging” words if at all possible.



If you are having trouble getting comfortable speak to your facilitator to get some ideas to help.

### 3. Mindful Breathing Exercise 3 (Emotions)

We are going to practice mindful breathing again. Let's build on what we learned during our last couple of times together and spend a few more minutes on preparation before we mindfully breathe.

Get your body into a comfortable position. You may find it helpful to uncross your arms and legs. Try sitting or laying in a position that is comfortable to your body.

Start at your feet and see if you can simply allow them to relax even more by feeling your feet becoming comfortably warm and relaxed. Then slowly move up your legs allowing the warmth and comfort to grow. Then into your hips, pelvis, and stomach... feeling comfortable warmth and relaxation. Now into your chest and arms...allowing the relaxation to fill you then into your arms. You may feel your arms and hands become heavier and more relaxed. Then allow the relaxation into your neck, your throat, your face, the back of your head and up to the top of your head. Feel your whole body relaxed, comfortably warm, safe, and protected.

Gently allow your awareness move to your mind. And allow your mind to become clearer, calmer, and more balanced. You might find it helpful to see your mind as a beautiful pond of water. Any time you have a distracting thought, imagine that it is like a small pebble being dropped into your pond. And just watch the ripples on the surface of the pond expand from the center... now continue to watch as the ripples become smaller and smaller until they are gone and your pond is once again calm. If you have another thought watch as the ripples grow and then ultimately become smaller until they disappear.

Now allow your awareness to focus lightly on your emotions. Without judging or trying to change your emotions... simply pay attention to any emotions you may be feeling.

Do you feel happiness?

Is there a place in your body that you tend to feel your happiness?

How about sadness? Do you feel any sadness right now?

How do you know you feel sad; is there a place in your body that you tend to hold your sadness?

Try not to make any emotions bigger or smaller – right now, just practice paying attention to your emotions without your emotions controlling your behavior.

This is the core of mindfulness practice... awareness without reaction.

If you do feel any emotion beginning to cause an unpleasant reaction in you – refocus on your breath.

In...

Out...

Deep...

Slow...

Calm...

Ease...

Smile...

Release...

Now slowly allow your attention to return to this room- the sounds of those around you – your body sitting comfortably in the room.

What did you notice about this exercise?

Is it getting easier, even just a bit easier to focus on your body without judging it?

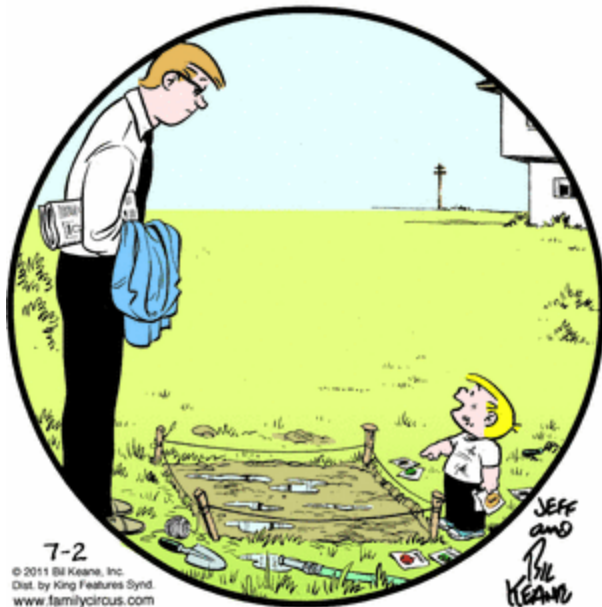
How about your mind? Can you mindfully look at your mind?

Finally, what did you notice about mindful awareness of your emotions?

Were you able to experience your emotion without having to react to your emotion?

#### 4. Exercise Mindful Caring of Your Self as a Garden

This next exercise gives us another way of looking at our emotions mindfully.



Some people find it helpful to see your emotions like plants in your garden. Most of us know that the plants that we water and care for tend to grow while the plants that we don't water don't grow so well.

For a moment imagine your emotions are your garden and you are the gardener that waters, weeds, fertilizes, and plows the ground.

One of the basic beliefs of mindfulness is that you already have everything you need to be happy. So as gardeners of our emotions, we don't need to go find seeds of happiness or seeds of joy. Rather our job is to care for the seeds that we have in our garden already. In other words, we don't need to go buy a new electronic device or travel to some exotic place to find

happiness. We can find happiness right where we are with the things we already have. In fact, you don't even need to change who you are to be happy – happiness is does not grow because we have the best car or are loved by the most people or because we have the biggest house. When we look around we find that the people that are the happiest are those who culture happiness right where they are – right now. In mindfulness we talk about learning to live in "the here and now."

Our culture often tries to convince us that happiness is "someday and somewhere." But someday and somewhere never come; as good caretakers of our garden we need to find joy here and now. As gardeners we learn to be happy when we water our seeds of happiness and we may also quickly discover that our happiness grows ten times over when we water the seeds of happiness in others.

So let's practice some mindful gardening of our emotions.

Start by focusing on your breath...

Now slowly bring your awareness to your body and get into a balanced and comfortable position... allow your body to relax and calm...

Then bring your focus to your mind... allow all the thoughts in your mind to become still and calm like a pond...

Allow your attention to move to your emotions...

Imagine each emotion is like a plant in your garden...

For a moment simply look around your garden and see if it is well watered... is it clear that someone is caring for your garden... cleaning up any messes that arise? Or is your garden somewhat uncared for?

What plant represents your happiness?

Is there just one plant representing happiness or are there many?

How healthy is your happiness plant? Does it need water? Does it need something else? What does your happiness plant need to grow and fruit?

What plant represents your anger?

Can you find a plant in your garden that represents sadness?

How about love? What plant represents love in your life?

What are some of the other plants in your garden? What emotions do they represent?

## 5. Exercise 5 – Mindfulness with a Bell



As we practice mindfulness, sometimes we need a little “help” to keep us moving forward. Sometimes our very active mind starts racing and tells us that we are wasting our time, living in a fantasy world, or just failing at another part of our life. This racing mind is to be expected. Our minds have worked for years to protect us and keep us out of trouble and when we try to slow our mind down, that protector part of our brain isn’t ready to trust or give up control.

If you find that your mind is racing and judging you or judging others it means that you are on your path, but you may need a bit of help to make it through this rough patch. Some of us use a tool like a simple little bell to remind us to slow down and reconnect with our breath. Now you don’t need to run out and buy a big expensive bell. Your “bell” can be anything that reminds you to mindfully breathe. Your “bell” can be a recording of a bell, or a timer bell that you already have, some people use a bell app that is available for free online and you could even use the sound of a bird’s song or the laugh of a child to be your bell.

But let’s practice with the sound of a soft gentle bell to practice our mindful breathing.

In a moment the wellness facilitator will lightly invite a soft sound from the bell 3 times. Please use each sound of the bell to breathe deeply and mindfully. Each sound of the bell should invite you to explore inside of yourself and find your “home.” That home is your place of relaxation, peace, and healing that is within yourself. Your “true” home is something that you carry with you all the time and that no one can take away from you unless you give them the power to do so.

Let’s begin – start, as always getting your body into a comfortable and effortless position. Now listen <bell> ....

Breathe in

Breath out

Breathe in



Breathe out

Breathe in

Breathe out

<bell>

Breathe in

Breathe out

Breathe in

Breathe out

Breathe in

Breathe out

<bell>

Breathe in

Breathe out

Breathe in

Breathe out

Breathe in

Breathe out

Now you will hear two sounds of the bell close together. This is a sign that it is time to return your awareness to this room.

<bell> <wait one breath cycle> <bell>

Calmly and quietly scan your body, your mind, and your emotions...

What are you experiencing?

## 6 Exercise 6 – Practicing Mindfulness Everyday



While it is relatively easy to practice mindful wellness sitting in a quiet room with a beautiful bell to remind us to focus on our breathing, in order for us to live mindful wellness we need to learn to practice when we are doing some of the most ordinary tasks of our day.

As we learn to practice mindful wellness as we brush our teeth or as

we wash the dishes, we may quickly discover that we can find peace and happiness throughout our day... not just in our quiet room.

Our exercise today is to practice mindful wellness as we participate in other activities. You will need some paper and colored pencils or crayons.

Start by practicing mindful breathing so get in a comfortable position and focus on the in and out of your breath.

In...

Out...

Deep...

Slow...

Calm...

Ease...

Smile...

Release..

Now slowly open your eyes and start using the crayons or colored pencils on the paper... you can draw objects or simply just start adding colors to the paper... but no matter what you draw... continue to focus on your breath and staying relaxed and calm...

If you feel your Self getting anxious or excited... stop coloring for a bit... close your eyes and refocus on your breath.

When you feel calm filling you again, slowly open your eyes and begin coloring again...

Again, if you feel your Self getting anxious or excited... stop coloring for a bit... close your eyes and refocus on your breath.

And again, when you feel calm filling you again, slowly open your eyes and begin coloring again...

Take 2 more minutes to “finish” your coloring.

What did you notice about maintaining your calm as you colored?

How do you think maintaining your calm may change as you participate in other activities like washing dishes?

Or listening to music?

Or doing a math problem?

Or having a conversation with someone you care about? or someone you are indifferent about...or someone who may have a challenging relationship with you?

The practice of mindful wellness is to do just that “practice” it is not about doing it “right” or doing it every moment of the day, or being good at it.... The practice is simply practice and when you “fail” like all of us “fail” you forgive your Self and begin practicing again.

## 7. Exercise 7 – Sharing Happiness

Our final exercise in this workbook concerns helping find true happiness by caring for your Self and others. One of the basic beliefs of mindful wellness is true happiness does not come from things; true happiness comes from opening our hearts and minds to caring for our Self and for caring for others. When we open our Self to caring for others and learn compassion, we can experience happiness and joy that is not dependent upon other people or things.

In order to care for others, we need to begin by caring for our Self. Caring for your Self is a very personal and individual matter. No one knows what you need to be happy any better than you know your Self.

Experience teaches us that focusing only on temporary things or experiences, such as working to have the fastest car or biggest house, are just that – temporary and honestly once we have a fast car, we always want a faster one or once we have a big house we want a bigger one. Chasing after things leads us down a path of always wanting – wanting faster, bigger, more, louder, prettier. The path of wanting will not bring us happiness.

What do you really need to make your Self happy and joyful?

While you need to answer this question for your Self, you are cautioned to avoid seeking happiness with objects like alcohol, drugs, or even food. You are even cautioned to base your happiness on other people or other things... take a moment to look inside and discover what makes your Self happy and joyful.

So let's try this exercise...

You have been practicing focusing on your breath, so start there.

In...

Out..

In...

Out...

In.. relaxed

Out.. happy

Relaxed....

Happy...

Relaxed...

Happy...

Now let an image develop in your mind an image that brings you joy...

You may imagine a beautiful ocean scene or a mountain pasture...

Maybe your image is a cool and deep green forest or inside of an art museum...

Let it be your own image... a place and a time that makes you joyful...

Feel the joy in your body...

Feel the joy in your mind...

Feel the joy in your emotions...

Take a moment and simply enjoy the sensation of peace and joy...

<Sit in silence for a minute or two>

Now picture your joy like a colorful flower that is blooming... let your joyful flower bloom bigger and bigger.

Now imagine that you let your flower float up away from your body and see the flower of your joy being shared with those that you love... possibly family members, close friends, a loved pet or other animal, or others that you care for deeply... picture that your joy is helping to wake up their joy.

Now image that your flower of joy is being shared with those people or things who you may have met, or seen but do not have a strong emotion toward...neither positive nor negative feelings... possibly someone you stood in line with at a grocery store... a squirrel in the yard, or a bird in the sky, or someone you saw at school...or work... or at a coffee shop.... Picture your joy is helping to allow them to feel their joy.

Finally, if you are ready, image you share your joy with other things or people with whom you have a challenging relationship...a dog that may have growled at you or even bit you, a peer that spoke badly about you, or an authority figure that you feel abused their power. You are not being asked to allow others to hurt you... rather... you are being asked to simply share your joy with others from whom you would typically hide your positive emotions... Picture your joy is helping them to feel happier and more joyful.

This is one of the secrets of happiness – the more joy and happiness we share... the more joy and happiness we have available for our Self!



When you are ready, return your awareness to this room and write down some things that you noticed about sharing your joy and happiness.

## 8. Closing comments

This manual is just a beginning tool to help you build a life that filled with happiness, wellness, and caring compassion. Some of the exercises may feel “funny” or “weird,” but please know that many other people have used exercises and beliefs outlined in this workbook to find their joy.

Some final key points to remember as you choose to live a life driven by the need to achieve and choose a life based upon care for your Self and others are listed below. Please review them and use those that fit and set aside those points that do not fit into your life at this time.

We are constantly working to make this workbook better, so please send your ideas, feedback, and suggestions to: [feedback@newhavenyfs.org](mailto:feedback@newhavenyfs.org).

- ✓ When working to make those around you happy... start by making your Self happy.
- ✓ When working to make your Self happy... start by making those around you happy.
- ✓ When you don't know what to do and your life feels out of control... focus on your breath.
- ✓ The secret to success is not being perfect... the secret to success is get up and try again each time you trip.

The next 10 points are from Zen Teachings

- ✓ Do one thing at a time
  - ✓ Do it slowly and deliberately
  - ✓ Do it completely
  - ✓ Do Less
  - ✓ Put space between things
  - ✓ Develop rituals
  - ✓ Designate time for certain things
  - ✓ Devote time to sitting
  - ✓ Smile and serve others
  - ✓ Make cleaning and cooking a meditation
- 
- ✓ Maya Angelou the poet said, “Hate: it has caused a lot of problems in this world, but it has not solved one yet.”
  - ✓ Mahatma Gandhi said, “You may never know what results come of your actions, but if you do nothing, there will be no results.”



- ✓ The Buddha said, “Believe nothing, no matter where you read it or who has said it, not even if I have said it, unless it agrees with your own reason and your own common sense.”
- ✓ “Wisdom is nothing more than healed pain.” – Robert Gary Lee

The next 7 are called “7 Lovely Logics” – Author Unknown

- ✓ Make peace with your past so it doesn’t spoil your present.
- ✓ What others think about you is none of your business
- ✓ Time heals almost everything; give the time, some time
- ✓ No one is the reason of your happiness – except for yourself.
- ✓ Don’t compare your life to others, you have no idea what their journey is all about.
- ✓ Stop thinking too much, it’s alright not to know the answers
- ✓ Smile, you don’t own all the problems in the world.
  
- ✓ Carl Jung, psychologist said, “Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.”
- ✓ “Compassion is always born of understanding, and understanding is the result of looking deeply.” Thich Nhat Hanh
- ✓ “It takes a strong heart to love, but it takes an even stronger heart to continue to love after it has been hurt.” - Author Unknown
- ✓ The Dalai Lama writes, “Whether one believes in a religion or not, and whether one believes in rebirth or not, there isn’t anyone who doesn’t appreciate kindness and compassion.”
- ✓ Author unknown, “Everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about. Be kind. Always.”
- ✓ Deepak Chopra, “Be happy for no reason, like a child. If you are happy for a reason, you’re in trouble because that reason can be taken from you.”
- ✓ Pema Chödrön, “It isn’t the things that happen to us in our lives that cause us to suffer, it’s how we relate to the things that happen to us that causes us to suffer.”
- ✓ “Give me knowledge so that I may have kindness for all.” Plains Indian saying.

Please use this page to add some of your own quotes

## End Notes / References

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