

New Jersey Center for Mindful Awareness

Workshops for MBSR Alumni

Refining Our Relationship with Presence: An Exploration of Mindfulness Perspectives and Practice

How we understand our human experience can profoundly influence our relationship with ourselves and the world around us. Ever since Descartes declared in the 1600's "*I think therefore I am*" much of the western sense of identity has been localized in thought.

This workshop will explore our human experience through the lens of Mindfulness where a primary emphasis is placed on **Embodiment**—living in and through one's body and **Compassion**—relating to experience from the heart. As Western and Eastern sciences begin to blend through contemplative neuroscience and a deepening understanding of the body-mind connection, the foundational role of enhanced body awareness has been recognized as a core element of stress reduction, resilience and overall wellness. And yet, As Ken Wilber who is a prominent modern day philosopher writes: "*Few of us have lost our minds, but most of us have lost our bodies.*"

Over 2500 years ago awareness of the Body was described as the first of four foundations of Mindfulness Practice. Contact with the earth as known through the body provides an unshakeable foundation for our practice and so it is where we begin. Interwoven with contact is how we meet our moment to moment experience...is it experienced as pleasant or unpleasant?.. Do we seek it or try to avoid it? ...can we hold it with curiosity and compassion? Our *way of meeting* what we come in contact with is what is described as the second foundation for mindfulness practice. Since these two foundational elements of practice are so intermingled we will be exploring them together, both conceptually and experientially as this workshop unfolds.

*The time will come when, with elation, you will greet yourself arriving at your own door
.....you will love again the stranger who was yourself"*
(from Derek Walcott's poem "Love after Love")

If you are an alumni of an MBSR course and you would like to revisit, refine, and refresh your practice
Please consider joining us for this workshop.

Who: Course will be taught by Ken A. Verni and Maria Martinez Alonso

What:

- 5 weekly sessions 2.5 hours in length
- Weekly Mindfulness Practice 'assignments' for formal and informal practice.
- Access to new audio files with guided practice and short presentations to explain and support your mindfulness practice.
- Handouts, Short Readings and links to relevant audio/video files
- Weekly support and Individualized guidance via email

Where: Highland Park Conservative Temple, 3rd ave

When: Monday Evenings: October 16, 23, 30, November 6 & 13 **Time:** 7 to 9.. 9:15...9:30

Fee: \$300

Register: By sending email to kenaverni@gmail.com

Intentions/Themes for Each Session

Session #1 (10/16)

Coming together as a practice group, overview of course intentions and introduction to the “Four Foundations of Mindfulness”. The four foundations of Mindfulness can be generally described as Body, Feeling Tone, Thoughts/Emotions (mental activity) and Contemplations/Insights on the Human Condition (i.e. aggregates of experience, attachment, impermanence, non-self and beyond). Each Foundation is understood as an Object for our Attention as well as an integral element of the Human Experience. Our focus for this 5 session workshop will be predominantly on the first two foundations of mindfulness.

Session #2 (10/23)

Starting with Contact and Body Awareness. Careful Observation of our moment to moment experience requires some stability of presence. In this session, we will begin exploring the first foundation of mindfulness by refining our moment to moment experience of the body sensations via breath, contact with the earth, movement and cultivation of compassionate presence. We will also explore how conditions in the body influence perception, attitude, and mental/emotional agitation or contentment.

Session #3 (10/30)

Meeting Experience as it Arrives. There is great emphasis given to the moment of contact in traditional mindfulness teachings. How do we *Meet* each moment. Touch consciousness, sound consciousness, sight consciousness, taste consciousness, smell consciousness, each of these “sense doors” are inherently flavored by an automatic, non-cognitive ‘appraisal’ as being pleasant, unpleasant or neither pleasant nor unpleasant. This “feeling tone” that is interwoven into every experience is the 2nd foundation of mindfulness and has a profound influence on everything that follows after. In this session, we will begin exploring the 2nd Foundation of Mindfulness both conceptually and experientially.

Session #4 (11/06)

Cultivating Compassion and Insight into our Automatic and Habitual ways of Meeting Experience. In this session we will continue with the exploration of the 2nd Foundation of Mindfulness. Practicing with how to cultivate increased awareness of “Feeling Tone” (also referred to as Hedonic Tone) and letting this awareness support our sustained present moment attentiveness as compared to getting pulled into the thoughts and emotions that arise in response to the feeling tone embedded in our contact with internal/external events. Practices for both formal and informal mindfulness of the 2nd foundation will be explored.

Session #5 (11/13)

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness as a guide for our moment to moment formal practice and as path for cultivating mindfulness in our everyday lives and deepening our embrace of our human experience. In this final session of the workshop, we will explore how to integrate what we have been learning about into the immediacy of our formal practice – Bringing formal attention to body/breath sensations, physical contact with sense objects, appraisal, movements of heart and mind, and our collective experience as humans within each meditation session. We will also explore the four foundations of Mindfulness as a conceptual framework for understanding the common elements that are integral to our way of being in the world. Breathing out, we will come to a close.