Reinventing the Wheel: Mindfulness Definition and Development in Buddhism and Psychology

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Reinventing the Wheel: Mindfulness Definition and Development in Buddhism and Psychology

Abstract
Recent psychological interest in the benefits of Buddhist meditation has led to support for mindfulness as an important variable in well-being and as a target of clinical intervention. Although mindfulness interventions are gaining empirical support for a variety of conditions, low practice rates and high attrition rates may hinder the impact of this intervention. Low adherence rates in mindfulness interventions may be increased by incorporating additional Buddhist interventions which facilitate motivation to meditate and support mindfulness development. This dissertation presents the Buddhist operationalization of mindfulness and three areas of Buddhist intervention that are supportive of mindfulness as part of a larger spiritual path. There is developing evidence in psychology for several areas of Buddhist practice, suggesting that when incorporated into current mindfulness interventions, these additional practices may increase treatment adherence. The role and importance of intent, compassion, and morality in Buddhist mindfulness development are presented, and psychological support for these interventions is discussed. Recommendations for incorporating additional empirically supported Buddhist practices into mindfulness interventions are made.

Degree Type
Dissertation

Degree Name
Doctor of Psychology (PsyD)

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Subject Categories
Psychiatry and Psychology

Comments
Library Use: LIH

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ABSTRACT

Recent psychological interest in the benefits of Buddhist meditation has led to support for mindfulness as an important variable in well-being and as a target of clinical intervention. Although mindfulness interventions are gaining empirical support for a variety of conditions, low practice rates and high attrition rates may hinder the impact of this intervention. Low adherence rates in mindfulness interventions may be increased by incorporating additional Buddhist interventions which facilitate motivation to meditate and support mindfulness development. This dissertation presents the Buddhist operationalization of mindfulness and three areas of Buddhist intervention that are supportive of mindfulness as part of a larger spiritual path. There is developing evidence in psychology for several areas of Buddhist practice, suggesting that when incorporated into current mindfulness interventions, these additional practices may increase treatment adherence. The role and importance of intent, compassion, and morality in Buddhist mindfulness development are presented, and psychological support for these interventions is discussed. Recommendations for incorporating additional empirically supported Buddhist practices into mindfulness interventions are made.

Keywords: Mindfulness, meditation, clinical psychology, Buddhism
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I first had the idea to study Buddhism and psychology as a sophomore at Michigan State University. These early interests, fostered by the teachings of Dr. Andrew Barclay, in many ways sowed the seeds for this project, my graduate education, and my journeys in between. I have been supported, encouraged, guided, and tolerated by many, many people, and I am grateful for the support I have received. This project would not have been possible without the kind encouragement and guidance of Dr. Michael Christopher. His constant support and advice have helped focus and motivate what could have otherwise been an overwhelming undertaking. I am also grateful to Dr. James Lane and Dr. Genevieve Arnaut for their helpful comments and support, both on this project and during my graduate education. Gratitude is also offered to my friends and family for their constant support throughout the preparation of this paper. I also thank the authors I’ve cited in this paper, as it is the community of scholars interested in Buddhism, meditation, and psychology that have been inspiring and indirectly support this work. I’d also like to thank the Vipassana Meditation community for providing the opportunities for retreats around the world. May all beings be happy!
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Introduction

The recent incorporation of mindfulness and acceptance strategies into the mainstream psychological rubric has had enough impact to be considered a paradigmatic shift in psychological philosophy. Over the past 15 years, there has been an incredible incorporation of Buddhist philosophy and practice into the mainstream psychological community. Mindfulness uniquely has been extrapolated from the Buddhist sources and interventions, which when cultivated, leads to the reduction of suffering and pathology. The development of mindfulness as a psychological construct is now at a point where an investigation of how mindfulness can be most effectively cultivated is necessary.

There has been a rapid delimiting of the exercises and interventions utilized to cultivate mindfulness, which is antithetical to the plethora of practices to cultivate well-being in Buddhist practice. The Buddhist literature contains a myriad of interventions, assessments, stages, and guidelines for the development of mindfulness and cultivation of other requisite qualities for the removal of suffering and cultivation of wisdom. These go well beyond what has been utilized in mainstream psychology. Within Buddhism, mindfulness is but one aspect of a path towards cultivating wisdom and eradicating suffering, and some have argued that mindfulness is inseparable from the related concepts (Olendzki, 2008a). Baer (2003) noted that conceptualizing mindfulness through a Western scientific lens may “risk overlooking important elements of the long tradition from which mindfulness meditation originates” (p. 140). The specific risk of this would be, as mentioned by Teasdale, Segal, and Williams (2003), misunderstanding the specific mechanisms at work in mindfulness, and their specific relationship to different types of suffering. Furthermore, Christopher, Charoensuk, Gilbert, Neary, and Pierce (2009)
recently demonstrated that mindfulness is not currently conceptually equivalent in Western and Buddhist societies, further evidence supporting the discrepancy between the two mindfulness constructs. Thus, although the initial operationalization and development of mindfulness interventions and assessments have yielded positive results, there is a potential loss in the separation of mindfulness as a single construct from its original context in Buddhism. Of particular interest for psychotherapy, is how the preliminary ethical, philosophical, and attentional trainings are used to influence and support the later mindfulness practices. The primary goal of this dissertation is to examine some of these preliminary Buddhist practices that help prepare meditators for meditation on a functional level in order to incorporate them into Western psychotherapeutic practice. The incorporation of additional Buddhist practices into currently utilized interventions may increase the efficacy of mindfulness development, and empirical support from a multitude of domains and psychological perspectives will be referenced to lend support for the inclusion of additional Buddhist practices in interventions aimed at increasing well-being.

Although there has been much initial focus on mindfulness, other recent interventions have focused on other Buddhist practices, such as ethical behavior compassion, and concentration. Mainstream psychological interventions such as dialectical behavior therapy (DBT; Linehan, 1993), acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT; Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999), mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR; Kabat-Zinn, 1990), and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT; Segal et al., 2002) have included concentration or non-judgmental awareness exercises to reduce pathology, several other interventions have been developed utilizing other Buddhism-derived
intervention strategies (Avants & Margolin, 2004; Carson et al., 2005; Gilbert & Irons 2004). These interventions have utilized such additional trainings as ethical precepts, compassion visualizations, and loving-kindness meditations. Although still nascent, there is developing support for incorporating these practices into the larger psychological mindfulness rubric. A synthesized treatment, grounded in the empirical findings and developed from the current mindfulness literature, coupled with the scaffolding for developing mindfulness in Buddhist literature, may increase the effectiveness of these interventions, reduce attrition, and increase applicability of the interventions. This is especially important given recent findings that mindfulness practice rates are typically below what is recommended (Carmody & Baer, 2007) and that a there is a dose-response curve in terms of time spent meditating and outcome (Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2008).

Buddhist sources excellently elucidate how to create conditions supportive of mindfulness, from the initial cultivation of interest in change all the way to developing the highest levels of concentration leading toward enlightenment (Brown, 2006). In both psychotherapy and Buddhist meditation, there is a strong emphasis on cultivating the right intent for the practices and experiences that will be elicited though each respective intervention (Bodhi, 1984). Mindfulness interventions in psychology, and perhaps clinical psychology in general, will benefit from an exploration of how Buddhist adepts are orientated to the practice of meditation.

In this dissertation, the role mindfulness plays in Buddhist meditation will be explored, including the additional practices utilized in Buddhism to develop the capacity for mindfulness, specifically focusing on exercises that typically precede more formal
meditation. Buddhist concepts related to mindfulness development and Western psychological concepts related to Buddhist practices are presented in five main chapters. In Chapter 1 mindfulness definitions are explored; in Chapter 2 the role of intent for motivation is explored; in Chapter 3 loving-kindness and compassion is discussed; in Chapter 4 the importance of ethical and moral development is reviewed; and, in Chapter 5 suggestions for a Buddhist congruent mindfulness intervention are provided.
Chapter 1. Conceptualizations of Mindfulness: East and West

The essence of the Buddha’s teaching can be summed up in two principles: The Four Noble Truths and The Noble Eightfold Path. (Bodhi, 1984, p. 1)

Mindfulness in Buddhism

The doctoral foundation for the two oldest Buddhist schools of thought, the Southeast Asian Theravada and the Tibetan Mahayana, are the Four Noble Truths (cattari ariyasaccani) and the eightfold path (ariya atthangika magga); teachings directly attributed to the Buddha (Bodhi, 1984; Nyantiloka, 2001; Payutto, 2003). The two contain the entirety of the Buddha’s teachings and are considered the doctrine and path (dhamma-vinaya) leading to the eradication of suffering (Bodhi, 1984). The four noble truths are: (1) the noble truth of suffering (dukkhasacca pabba), (2) the noble truth of the origin of suffering (samudahasacca pabba), (3) the noble truth of the extinction of suffering (nirodhasacca pabba), and (4) the noble truth of the path that leads to the extinction of suffering (maggasacca pabba; Jotika & Dhamminda, 1986; Nyantiloka, 2001). The first noble truth involves an understanding of suffering, which includes suffering caused by birth, aging, death, sorry, lamentation, pain, grief, despair, and not getting desires met (Nyantiloka, 2001). The second and third noble truths teach that the source of suffering is the craving for inherently impermanent and impersonal sources of wellbeing in attempts to avoid existential pain (Bodhi, 1984).

The fourth noble truth is the path to elimination of suffering, or the eightfold path, which includes Right Understanding or View (samma-ditthi), Right Thought or Intent (samma-sankappa), Right Speech (samma-vaca), Right Action (samma-kammanta),

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1 Terms in italics are in Pali, the language of many source Theravadan texts.
Right Livelihood (samma-ajīva), Right Mindfulness (samma-sati), Right Concentration (samma-samādhi), and Right Effort (samma-vayaṃa). These eight factors are broken down into three sections for cultivation, with Right View and Right Intent making up the wisdom section (panna), the morality section (sīla) consisting of Right Speech, Right action, and Right Livelihood, and the concentration (samādhi) containing Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration, and Right Effort (Nyantiloka, 2001). The three sections are considered reciprocally and mutually supportive, such that Right View and Right Intent provide the initial intellectual reflections that support and motivate the experiential practices of mindfulness, morality, and concentration, cultivating the application of wisdom to all action, thereby facilitating “Right” (i.e. wholesome and skillful) pursuit of well-being (Bodhi, 1984). Of paramount importance is the development of mindfulness.

Mindfulness. Buddhist scholar Andrew Olendzki (2008) stated: “The cultivation of mindfulness as a meditation practice entails coming to know it when we see it and learning how to develop it” (para. 30); Thus, there is a necessity for a deep clarification and appreciation of what mindfulness is and learning how to appropriately cultivate it. Indeed, this is the thrust of eightfold path. The English word “mindfulness” is most often used to refer to three Buddhist concepts: mindfulness (sati), Right Mindfulness (sammasati), and the four foundations of mindfulness (satipatthana). Additionally, the English word mindfulness can be used in several different categories or explanations of its function and role, namely as a factor of enlightenment (bojjhanga), as a mental factor (caitesika), and as one of the five faculties (indriya) (Nyanaponika, 1962). Within Buddhism, there are also several terms that are often directly related to mindfulness, used
in the same context of mindfulness, or combined with mindfulness. They are clear comprehension or discernment (*sampajanna*), attention (*mansakara*), close application (*upatthana*), and non-superficiality or heedfulness (*appamada*). Lastly, because mindfulness is often described within its contexts as a beautiful (virtuous) mental factor, it is helpful to understand the other beautiful factors with which it co-arises. This section will begin with a discussion of mindfulness as *sati* and the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipatthana*), discuss the relationship of mindfulness to Right Mindfulness (*sammasati*), then discuss the other aspects of wholesome mental experience that co-arise with mindfulness, placing mindfulness within the larger Buddhist context.

**Sati.** Mindfulness (*sati*) is considered a naturally occurring, occasional, internal mental state that when present is associated with wholesome qualities, which facilitate peace and equanimity. It is not necessarily present in any given moment of experience (in contrast to contact, feeling, perception, volition, one-pointedness, liveliness, and attention, the universal mental factors), but when it is, it characterizes the moment as wholesome or ethically positive (Olendzki, 2008a). The Abhidhamma, a seminal Buddhist text presenting a phenomenological perspective of meditation (Dreyfus & Thompson, 2007; Olendzki 2008a, Thera, 1962) presents definitions of all moments of awareness in terms of four criteria. The characteristic of mindfulness is the non-floating of attention away from the object of focus, or thoroughness. Its function is remembering or non-forgetfulness. Mindfulness manifests as guardianship in terms of the confrontation of an objective field of awareness. The basis or cause of mindfulness is a strong noting or strong perception, involving a discerning quality, of the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipatthana*; discussed below)(Bodhi, 1993; Olendzki, 2008a; Wallace, 2008; Wallace...
& Bodhi, 2006). Thus, sati is multifaceted, involving a firm and close relationship to the object of attention (upatthana), a remembrance to be in the present moment, and as strongly and objectively related to the foundations of mindfulness. Given the importance for understanding mindfulness these four aspects of mindfulness are considered in depth.

**Mindfulness as non-floating.** The characteristic of mindfulness as non-floating has often been translated as “bare attention,” suggesting a “close attention” to the object of focus (Nyanaponika, 1962 p. 30). It is considered “bare” to mean devoid of self-referenced elaborative cognitive and emotional interpretations and reactions; that is, keeping the mind evenly hovering on an object of perception (Nyanaponika, 1962; Wallace & Bodhi, 2006). This aspect of mindfulness has also been emphasized to be “non-superficiality” and “thoroughness” (Nyanaponika, 1962; Wallace & Bodhi, 2006).

Some authors (Naranjo & Ornstein, 1971; Wallace, 2008) have considered the translation of sati as “bare attention” more congruent with the mental factor of pure perceptual attention (manasikara), and as a conceptualization of mindfulness most helpful during early meditation training. Given the appreciation that all moments of attention include aspects of volition and motivation, the development of “bare attention” is suitable until the faculties have become refined enough to detect the effects of different types of intent, focus, and energy on experience. Nyanaponika Thera (1962) stated that mindfulness as bare attention helps to know, shape, and liberate the mind. The attentional aspect of sati has been discussed thoroughly in recent Buddhist literature, and Wallace (2008) noted that bare attention (manasikara) helps sustain mindfulness, but that the two are not equal. Furthermore, Wallace (2008) noted that “bare attention is not a complete practice, and by itself it can be helpful and yet very limiting.” (p. 61). Wallace (2008)
added that by limiting the definition of mindfulness to “bare attention” and by focusing on non-elaborative cognition, there is the potential to lose out on all the wholesome, positive elements that mindfulness also supports, such as loving kindness, compassion, equanimity, and joy.

**Mindfulness as remembering.** The multifaceted definition of *sati* is also translated as functioning in the capacity of non-forgetfulness, a remembrance to keep awareness towards the object of focus (Wallace & Bodhi, 2006). In this sense, mindfulness is used to sustain attention evenly at the point of perception connoting a remembering or reminding of the aim of meditation (Wallace, 2008). Mindfulness can be translated as non-forgetfulness “in the sense of maintaining unwavering attention to a present reality” (Wallace, 2008, p. 60). Elaborating on this definition is the related term of “heedfulness” (*appamada*), which is non-separation from mindfulness (Payutto, 1988) and facilitates ethical behavior.

This overlap between “bare attention” and “remembering” is not completely due to a problem in translation or misunderstanding of Buddhist literature. According to Nyanaponika Thera (1962) and other Abdhidhamma scholars (e.g., Dreyfus & Thompson, 2007) mindfulness involves placing the focus of awareness at the cognitive level of the mind, where before memory and elaborative processes categorize perceived stimuli. Thus, *sati* expresses both these mental functions as a referent to specifically this phenomenological aspect of consciousness that is not well translated into English. Keeping the mind closely experiencing the interplay and effect of the relationship between perceptual attention and memory or cognitive elaboration is precisely the role of *sati* (Nyanaponika, 1962). In this way, *sati* is also related to other wholesome factors
(discussed below), as it entails a sense of freedom and peace, as awareness is not carried away by perceptual, cognitive, and emotional events (Payutto, 1988).

**Mindfulness as a guardian.** In the last two components of the above description, that of mindfulness as a guardian and as caused by a perception and discernment of the foundations of mindfulness, it is clear that mindfulness is imbedded in the larger Buddhist worldview, as all the descriptors rest upon and are in mutual relationships with other aspects of the Buddhist path for the elimination of suffering. “Bare attention” still requires an understanding of *satipatthana*, or the objects of which one is to be mindful. For another example, describing the third aspect mindfulness as “guardianship” requires training and wisdom into what and how one guards their experience in order to set up the conditions for mindfulness. This is generally where the integration of Right View or clear comprehension (discernment; *sampajanna*) is introduced as combining with mindfulness (*sati*) to support the cultivation of Right Mindfulness (*sammasati*; Naranjo & Ornstein, 1971; Nyanaponika, 1962; Payutto, 1998; Wallace, 2008; Wallace & Bodhi, 2006).

**Satipathana.** The practice and foundation for developing mindfulness are the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipatthana*): mindfulness of the body, mind, feelings, and the contents of consciousness. These are the four main objects to contemplate with mindfulness, and although not exhaustive, they help support the definition of mindfulness as *sati*. In this application, right mindfulness and wisdom are cultivated by using clear comprehension and mindfulness to examine these four foundations of experience, and to discern subjective experience of wholesomeness or unwholesomeness (Nyanaponika, 1962). *Satipatthana* is itself a practice in the development of Right Effort (*atapi*), clear comprehension, and mindfulness.
The instructions for the establishment of mindfulness in the *satipatthana suta* are quite clear and simple (Olendzki, 2008a): one investigates as clearly as possible each of the four foundations of mindfulness. For the establishment of mindfulness in the body, the instructions are as follows:

- As mindfulness is internally present, one is aware: ‘Mindfulness is internally present in me.’
- As mindfulness is not internally present, one is aware: ‘Mindfulness is not internally present in me.’
- As the arising of unarisen mindfulness occurs, one is aware of that.
- As the arisen mindfulness is developed and brought to fulfillment, one is aware of that. (Olendzki, 2008a, para. 31)

Thus, the four foundations of mindfulness connote both a receptiveness and openness to experiencing the four specific objects (body, mind, feelings, and consciousness), as well as an active monitoring or checking of the nature and quality of ongoing experience (Nyanaponika, 1962). These two abilities, based upon mindfulness and clear comprehension, help establish Right Mindfulness towards the larger goal of cultivating wholesome qualities of experience and eliminating unwholesome qualities (Payutto, 1998).

*Samasati.* Right mindfulness, *samasati,* is the seventh step on the eightfold path, which outline the eight aspects of development of enlightenment and freedom from suffering in Buddhism. *Samasati* is considered “Right” mindfulness (prefix: *sama*) because it connotes an appreciation of the other aspects of the Eight Fold Path and the emphasis on clear understanding, freedom from delusion, and insight into the causes of suffering (Nyanaponika, 1962). *Samasati* is considered the combination of mindfulness (*sati*) and clear comprehension/discernment (*sampajanna*), because it is the ability to use
mindfulness to understand the nature of all phenomena, which in turn leads to the elimination of suffering (Payutto, 1988). Clear comprehension “should be understood to mean that to the clarity of bare mindfulness is added to the full comprehension of the purpose, and actuality, internal and external, or in other words: clear comprehension is Right Knowledge (nana) or wisdom (panna), based or Right Attentiveness (sati)” (Nyanaponika, 1962, p. 43). Right Mindfulness includes the understanding of the purpose of meditation, the suitability of different objects of focus, and the nature of reality. Thus, in order to practice right mindfulness, there must be clarity on the intent and ideals of the practice, a dedication to cultivating the mind, and an understanding of true nature of all phenomena; that is, that all material things are impermanent (anicca), that a sense of self is an ephemeral aggregate (anatta), and that true happiness cannot be sustained by attachment and aversion to conditioned phenomena (dukkha; Bodhi, 1998).

Clear comprehension therefore helps inform, shape, and support the development of mindfulness by decreasing desire for and attachment to afflictions that disturb the peacefulness of the mind. Reciprocally, mindfulness increases the ability to act and respond in an informed manner, rather than getting carried away by emotions or conditioned responses (Nyanaponika, 1962). Furthermore, it is emphasized that Right Mindfulness “must be guided by Right View, motivated by Right Intention, grounded in ethics, and be cultivated in conjunction with Right Effort” (Naranjo & Ornstein, 1971, p. 86). In a correspondence between Bikkhu Bodhi and Alan Wallace (2006), these two Buddhist scholars agreed that it is the combination of clear comprehension with mindfulness that cultivates Right Mindfulness and it is Right Mindfulness that is necessary for the application and development of wisdom and the eradication of
suffering. They further remind the reader that the application of Right Effort presupposes the ethical distinctions in Buddhism of wholesome and unwholesome mental states. Thus, although sati, in its most simple form, may be partially described as “bare attention,” “Right Mindfulness” always involves an appreciably wholesome outlook, motivation, and effort as delineated by the eightfold path. Furthermore, they emphasized that it is only through the cultivation of right mindfulness that mindfulness becomes a beneficial component of spiritual development.

**Mindfulness as a wholesome factor.** Olendzki (2008a) emphasized that mindfulness, as a specifically wholesome quality of the mental continuum as described in the Abhidhamma, is not separable from the ethical and moral practices in Buddhism due to its specific quality and definition, rather than as a matter of custom or social requirement. He argued that, even after considering and training aspects of linking intent to attention, developing the capacity for restricting and holding the attention, and beginning awareness of feeling states that co-dependently arise with sensory perception, mindfulness is uniquely a wholesome mental factor that arises only under specific situations. Far from being an ineffable state, Olendzki (2008a) stated that the Abhidhamma listed equanimity, non-greed (generosity), loving-kindness, self-respect, respect for others, faith, tranquility, lightness, malleability, wieldiness, proficiency, and rectitude as co-arising factors with mindfulness. These co-arising factors are uniquely positive and help characterize any moment as virtuous or wholesome. Most importantly, Olendzki (2008a) pointed out that all these descriptors of experience are present in every wholesome moment, and therefore in any moment of mindfulness. Furthermore, Olendzki (2008a) argued that mindfulness will never be present if there is greed, hatred,
delusion, envy, or avarice, as these are all unwholesome states and cast a present moment as such. Skillful means of experiencing unwholesome states are the appreciation and recognition that a moment is unwholesome and then taking the necessary steps to facilitate the arising of wholesome qualities.

Indeed, the role of mindfulness as a wholesome factor is quite related to the ability to discern wholesome and un-wholesome feelings, thoughts, and experiences as they arise. Similar to other aspects of development in Buddhist traditions, it simultaneously supports and is supported by the other co-arising wholesome factors. It is for this reason that Wallace (2008) advocated for the expansion of the mindfulness construct to include the other wholesome factors, because a delimiting definition of mindfulness as “bare attention” impedes development of wholesome qualities and therefore of advanced mindfulness itself: “Bare awareness can play an important role in this, and on occasion it may indeed prevent unwholesome thoughts from arising. But if we stick to bare attention alone, it can also prevent wholesome thoughts from arising!” (p. 61). Thus, mindfulness must be applied in the encouragement of wholesome states and to counteract unwholesome states. This expanded definition and conceptualization of mindfulness has immense ramifications for the development and cultivation of mindfulness, because it becomes necessary to also increase the capacity for and recognition of the related wholesome mental factors (Dreyfus & Thompson, 2007; Wallace, 2008).

In summation, the initial definition of mindfulness as sati from the Abhidhamma contains and alludes to its relationship with Right Mindfulness and the four foundations of mindfulness. Although the main characteristic of mindfulness may be bare attention or
a concerted effort to keep non-elaborative focus on experience, it is clear that this type of attention is directly related to, defined by, and supported by the ethical distinction of wholesome and unwholesome factors, the Buddhist model of cognition, and the larger aims of Buddhist meditation; that is, the ability to use insight (wisdom) of the sources of suffering to deconstruct faulty identification and enmeshment with conditioned phenomena (Olendzki, 2008a; Payutto, 1988).

**Worldview Differences between Buddhism and Western Psychology**

An accurate understanding of Buddhism and mindfulness in Western psychology is hindered by differences in epistemology, philosophical assumptions, and developmental incongruities. In order to most fully present how mindfulness is used in Buddhist contexts, a brief foray into the Buddhist worldview and understanding is provided.

First, many Buddhist texts are developmentally layered (Brown, 2006), such that terminology and concepts, including mindfulness, serve functions and have definitions that become more complex, intricate, and refined throughout spiritual development (Nyanaponika, 1962). Similar to Piagetian developmental theory in Western psychology, meditative development in a Buddhist context often includes qualitative shifts in awareness and perception, so that early methods and definitions (e.g., mindfulness as bare attention) are later revealed to be more complex and interrelated than initially defined. Thus, confusion can arise when various texts, authors, and schools of Buddhism are contrasted by lay, often novice observers who may be comparing a literal translation of a term in Pali or Sanskrit without considering the developmental or philosophical context within which the term is used. Mindfulness, a very important term with usage in a variety
of contexts and as a component of several compound words, has often been translated and elucidated without consideration of its developmental and contextual variance. The definition of mindfulness relies on its immediate context and doctrinal usage, which can vary based upon the developmental level of awareness and attainment the text is describing.

Second, one of the most definitive sources on Buddhist meditation, the Abhidhamma, is largely based on a phenomenological methodology and understanding of the mind (Bodhi, 1993; Dreyfus & Thompson, 2007; Wallace, 2008). The Abhidhamma elucidates a phenomenological perspective of how consciousness works, it, “…is essentially an attempt to systematize the Buddha’s teachings about the dynamics of moment-to-moment experience as it unfolds in the stream of consciousness” (Ole ndzki, 2008b, p. 15). This perspective is largely without parallel in Western philosophy and science. Often the closest Western parallel drawn to the method and nature of the Abhidhamma is the phenomenology of William James, because Western science has been dominated by rational empiricism since the early 1900s (Dreyfus & Thompson, 2007). As such, many Buddhist terms, definitions, and explanations lack accurate English translations and have often been inaccurately characterized as ineffable or mystical states (Olendzki, 2008a). Many terms in Buddhism have been roughly or inaccurately translated in English because they may lack specific corresponding English terms not only in the language, but also in the larger vernacular for describing consciousness from a phenomenological perspective. As far as mapping onto a Western scientific worldview, the Abhidhamma may have the most in common with cognitive psychology, in that it
gives a detailed analysis of perceptual and conceptual processing (Dreyfus & Thompson, 2007; Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991).

Third, Abhidhamma and Buddhist distinctions and classifications of internal experience are not based upon the Western discrimination between cognitive or affective phenomena. Rather, internal experience in the Abhidhamma is discerned by its ethical component, namely on whether experience is wholesome or unwholesome. That Buddhism is inherently an ethically informed and morally specific discipline has been largely ignored as it has been introduced in the West (Hanh, 1993; Olendzki, 2008a; Wallace, 2008). Recently, Olendzki (2008a) and Wallace (2008) have argued that a definition of mindfulness outside of the ethical implications of wholesome experience is certainly only partial, because mindfulness by definition is a wholesome experience in Buddhist practice and is fundamentally intertwined, conceptually and practically, with morality.

Fourth, several philosophical tenets that serve as the backbone of Buddhist practice are not espoused in Western psychology. Several fundamental realizations, considered integral to the Right View aspect of the eightfold path and to be deeply appreciated throughout Buddhist practice, are experiential insight into suffering (as the insufficiency of habitual experience for real, sustained happiness), impermanence, (non-substantiality), and selflessness. Indeed, it is the complete and utter understanding of these three concepts as the “three marks of existence” around which the entire Buddhist practice is organized (Bodhi, 1998; Nyanaponika, 1962). The methodology for understanding these tenets is both intellectual and experiential and is paramount given that meditation largely serves to de-construct perceptual and meaning-making processes
in order to eradicate bias. All definitions of mindfulness in a Buddhist perspective rely upon and are supported by the above points and will be considered in depth in the coming chapters.

**Mindfulness in Western Psychology**

**Definition of Mindfulness.** Western psychologists and psychiatrists have been interested in Eastern approaches to well-being beginning with Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, but only in the past 25 years have explicit interventions and assessments been developed to reap the benefits of meditative development. Mindfulness has been operationalized in western psychology largely based on the Kabat-Zinn (1994) definition, in which mindfulness is described as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally” (p. 4). This definition implies that mindfulness is a certain quality of awareness, which relies on the intentional deployment of attention in an open, non-elaborative manner. Germer (2004) also posited that “mindful moments are non-conceptual, present-centered, non-judgmental, intentional, participant observing, non-verbal, exploratory, and liberating” (p. 27). Teasdale (1999) indicated that mindfulness involves the focus on present moment experience in a non-goal-directed manner, free from habitual patterns of information processing, labeling, and judgment.

Recent scholarship has focused on how mindfulness is dissimilar from known pathological processes. For example, Bishop et al. (2004) note that, “mindfulness in contemporary psychology has been adopted as an approach for increasing awareness and responding skillfully to mental processes that contribute to emotional distress and maladaptive behavior” (p. 230). The current usage of mindfulness shares its definition
with ideas of bare or unelaborated attention (Brown & Ryan, 2003), distress tolerance, and it is antithetical to cognitive reactivity, rumination, or automatic and potentially pathogenic thinking. Baer (2003) described mindfulness meditation as an amalgamation of the following known positive psychological mechanisms: exposure, cognitive change (development of metacognitive awareness), self-management, relaxation, and acceptance. The quality of mindfulness is antithetical to catastrophizing, hopelessness, worry, and other cognitive distortions (Lynn, Das, Hallquist, & Williams, 2006). Various components of the construct have been emphasized in different definitions; however, there is general consensus that mindfulness definitions and processes are multifaceted, including a discernibly mindful intention, attention, and attitude (Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, & Freedman, 2006). Wallace and Shapiro (2006) proposed that meditation training supports balance in four domains: intent and motivation, attention regulation, cognition, and affect regulation. Shapiro et al. (2006) note that, although the attention and attitude aspects have received support in the growing literature, scant acknowledgement has been paid to the exploration and assessment of intention in mindfulness research. The attentional and attitudinal components of Western mindfulness definitions will be discussed below.

**Mindful attention.** Often, psychologists have focused on the un-elaborative attention aspect of mindfulness and the ability to hold emotions, thoughts, physical sensations, and mental processes as the object of attention (Lau et al., 2006; Teasdale, 1999). The quality of open, receptive attention in mindfulness has been differentiated from the focused attention cultivated in different forms of meditation (Baer, 2003; Bishop, 2004; Lau et al., 2006). Bishop et al. (2004) focused their definition of
mindfulness on the self-regulation of attention on immediate experience and the attitude of acceptance as the core components of a mindfulness definition. Bishop (2002) specifically focused on attention regulation, stating that mindfulness practice involves sustained attention and attention switching, without judgmental cognitive elaboration, and free from goal-directed objectives; that is, “reliance less on preconceived ideas, beliefs, and biases and more on paying attention to all available information” (p.74). Implicit in this definition is that attention control is the important point of mindfulness intervention rather than the cognitive, emotional, or attitudinal components that might interfere with or support sustained attentional focus. By developing the capacity for present-moment, accepting awareness, it is postulated that reactive, defensive, or potentially problematic automatic cognitive reactions to stimuli can be de-conditioned (Jain et al., 2007).

Mindfulness as a clinical intervention has also been hypothesized to facilitate change by providing insight into patterns of cognitive reactions to felt sensations, emotions, and other stimuli, and providing alternatives to these mental patterns (Lau et al., 2006). Indeed, cognitive psychologists have emphasized the importance of mindfulness in “de-automatizing” cognitive processing by introducing a state of mind that is self-reflective and dispassionate, allowing for “a ‘space’ between one’s perception and response” (Bishop et al., 2004, p. 232). More recent scholarship has emphasized that through mindfulness development individuals learn to dis-identify or “de-center” from identification with thoughts, feelings, and sensations (Lau et al., 2006).

**Mindful attitude.** Teasdale, Segal, and Williams (1995) argued that although a major portion of the benefit of mindfulness is a product of disrupting rumination by
attentional control, it is equally important to facilitate the process of *gently* returning the attention to the object of focus during mindfulness practice. This acceptance and awareness stance is in itself antithetical to an evaluative, judgmental ruminative process, and it is through the constant observation of this process that mindfulness is developed (Teasdale et al., 1995).

In her review of the extant literature, Baer (2003) found that most current mindfulness interventions, whether through formal meditation or awareness exercises, focusing on internal or external stimuli, utilizing formal attentional control or openness to experience, all are practiced with the intent of developing an attitude of non-judgmental acceptance. Mindfulness training involves a qualitative switch whereby thoughts, feelings, and experiences are observed in an open accepting way, and, as Bishop et al. (2004) suggested, this switch leads to an understanding of the contextual and transient nature of thoughts. This has been one of the core components of MBCT, in which the realization that “thoughts are not facts” (Teasdale et al., 2002, p. 249) is used to combat the functional utility of rumination in maintaining depression, connoting an understanding that sensations and thoughts are not indicative of an objective true reality (Lynn et al., 2006; Toneatto, 2002).

Most psychological definitions and utilizations of mindfulness have emphasized the development of a state of non-reactivity, but have not as thoroughly elucidated how this experience relates to or is supported by the intent to practice and the emotional components of such an openness. Thus, mindfulness in western psychology involves a certain attentional control and ability to select objects of focus as well as an attitude of
openness to experience, non-judgementality, passivity, receptiveness, curiosity, and perhaps self-compassion.

Unclear in the psychological definition is the relationship between the attentional, intentional, and emotional aspects of mindfulness, and the respective order of development. In Buddhism this relationship is more explicit and will be reviewed below. In summary, mindfulness in western psychology has been operationalized and constructed as a state of mind or a trait disposition, that facilitates (or is akin to) the dispassionate observation of internal events, supporting the willful deployment of attention (Bishop et al., 2004). Mindfulness has been incorporated in other psychological theoretical frameworks, philosophical paradigms, and treatment interventions in ways consistent and supportive of those relative theories, such as increasing distress tolerance in DBT, reducing rumination in MBCT, or promoting psychological flexibility in ACT.

**Empirical Support for Mindfulness in Psychology.** Three main areas of inquiry have been explored in mindfulness research: (1) the self-report measurement of mindfulness, (2) the development of mindfulness interventions, and (3) induction of mindful states and the impact of these states on psychological functioning. Research on the induction of mindful states will not be included in this section, because the focus of this section is on the effects of ongoing mediation practice and the definition and assessment of the mindfulness construct. This section will focus on mindfulness intervention and assessment research that uses formal meditation as a mechanism of intervention and that has been subject to rigorous empirical investigation.

**Measurement of mindfulness.** In the past 10 years, measures of mindfulness have been developed, including the Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale–Revised
(CAMS-R; Feldman, Hayes, Kumar, Greeson, & Laurenceau, 2007), the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI; Buchheld, Grossman, & Walach, 2001; Walach, Buchheld, Buttenmuller, Klienknecht, & Schmidt, 2006), the Toronto Mindfulness Scale (TMS; Lau et al., 2006), the Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS; Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004), The Five Factor Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ; Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006), and the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS; Brown & Ryan, 2003). There have also been novel efforts to quantify and measure compassion and Buddhist concepts such as the four immeasurables (joy, equanimity, loving kindness, and compassion; Kraus & Sears, 2009).

The MAAS, KIMS, and FFMQ have been studied most intensively. All except the TMS measure dispositional mindfulness, which measures state mindfulness (i.e., immediately following meditation); however, a trait version of the TMS has recently been developed and has demonstrated similar psychometric properties to the original TMS (Davis, Lau, & Cairns, 2009). Each of the aforementioned measures captures different aspects of mindfulness. For example, the MAAS explicitly measures mindful attention, the KIMS assesses four facets (observe, describe, act with awareness, and accept without judgment) of mindfulness congruent with DBT, the FFMQ has five facets, largely based upon the KIMS (observe, describe, act with awareness, nonjudgement of inner experience, and nonreactivity to inner experience), and the TMS assesses mindful decentering and curiosity. Broadly, measures of mindfulness have demonstrated inverse relationships with measures of pathology and distress, positive relationships with measures of well-being, and responsiveness to mindfulness interventions (e.g. Baer et al., 2004; Baer et al., 2006; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Davis, Lau, & Cairns, 2009).
Critique of mindfulness assessment. Despite these initial positive findings and widespread usage of these measures, a few problematic findings have emerged. The sensitivity of these measures to meditation experience has yielded inconsistent findings. For example, although the KIMS, FFMQ, MAAS, and TMS have demonstrated criterion validity with experienced meditators (Baer et al., 2004; Baer et al., 2008; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Davis, Lau, & Cairns, 2009; Kohls, Sauer, & Walach, 2009), there is growing evidence that latent mindfulness construct differences may exist between Buddhist and other research populations (Christopher, Christopher, & Charoensuk, 2009; Christopher, Charoensuk et al., 2009; MacKillop & Anderson, 2007). Van Dam, Earleywine, and Danoff-Burg (2009) found that although experienced meditators as a group had higher FFMQ scores than those without meditation experience, an item differential analysis revealed significant differences for 18 of the 39 items, suggesting that different latent constructs were being assessed. Specifically, these authors found that meditators responded equally to items that were negatively or positively worded to represent a lack or presence of mindfulness, whereas respondents without meditation experience differentially responded to positive and negatively worded items. In a replication study, using demographically matched samples, Baer, Samuel, & Lykins (2011) did not find significant differential item responding between meditators and nonmeditators however, they did find a significant difference between these two groups in the way mindfulness and mindlessness items were endorsed. However, similar to Van Dam et al.’s (2009) finding, Baer et al. (2011) found that nonmeditators had mean differences for positively and negatively worded mindfulness questions although individuals with meditation experience means for both style questions were identical. Although these differences may
represent a legitimate difference between groups, it leads to questions about the underlying construct being assessed, as well as the assumption that assessing the absence of mindfulness, such as with the MAAS, implies its presence (Hofling, Moosbrugger, Schermelleh-Engel, & Heidenreich, 2011; Rosch, 2007).

The factor structures of the multifaceted measures of mindfulness (KIMS, FFMQ, and TMS) have also yielded inconsistent findings. In a validation study of the psychometric properties of the KIMS in several clinical populations, Baum et al. (2010) found evidence for the four related constructs, but did not find evidence for one overarching mindfulness factor. However, when these researchers excluded the observe factor, a hierarchical model with an underlying “mindfulness” factor did fit. In contrast, Baer et al. (2008) found a five-factor solution for the FFMQ, with all factors loading on an underlying mindfulness factor, in a sample of mediators. In this study, meditation experience correlated with only four of five facets (all but act with awareness). Research on the KIMS and FFMQ has also demonstrated that the relationships between the facets is inconsistent and hypothetically may vary based upon meditation experience (Baer et al., 2008). In a non-clinical sample, Barnes and Lynn (2010) found that only the acting with awareness, non-reactivity, and non-judging factors of the FFMQ were negatively correlated to depression (describe had no correlation and observe was positive). Furthermore, they found that non-reacting mediated the relationship between the observe facet and depression, such that when observe was high and non-reacting was low, depression was high, but that when observe was high and non-reactivity was also high, depression was lower. The observe facet has been found to have inconsistent relationships with measures of pathology and well-being, such that it appears only in
higher mindfulness individuals does the self-observe facet become a marker of well-being rather than negative self-focus (Baer et al., 2008; Baum et al., 2010). However, Baer et al.’s (2008) hypotheses that the observe facet varies with meditation experience was not evidenced in a sample of Thai Buddhist monks (Christopher, Christopher, et al., 2009) and has been questioned by other authors (e.g., Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007).

A further problem with the FFMQ and KIMS is that the facets were developed with a priori factors based upon a DBT framework, and parceling—as opposed to item-level analysis has been used in the aforementioned factor analyses on these scales (Baer et al., 2004; Baer et al., 2006; Baer et al., 2008). When confirmatory factor analyses were conducted at the item level on the KIMS, these four factors could not be replicated (Christopher, Charoensuk, et al., 2009). Similarly, Davis et al. (2009) found a ceiling effect when validating the trait TMS with a population of very experienced meditators, such that, after 20 years of meditation experience, no mindfulness gains were found. The authors hypothesized that this could indicate either a novel finding that there is an observable limit to mindfulness gains or that the TMS is not sensitive to mindfulness development in very experienced meditators. This finding represents a broad problem with the nature of mindfulness research in the West, in that mindfulness interventions and assessments have been developed using Western psychological constructs for validity referents rather than the developmentally nuanced teachings for mindfulness development in Buddhism. Thus, although the measurement of mindfulness has yielded promising and thought-provoking research, there are clear questions about the true nature of the construct being assessed and its congruence with Buddhist mindfulness (Christopher, Charoensuk, et al., 2009; Christopher, Christopher, et al., 2009).
Mindfulness interventions. Several interventions utilizing mindfulness components have been developed over the past two decades and they have commonly been referred to as the “third wave” of behavioral therapies (e.g., Hayes, Follette, & Linehan, 2004). More specifically, interventions with mindfulness as a core component include dialectical behavior therapy (DBT; Linehan, 1993), acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT; Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999), and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT; Segal et al., 2002). There are also a variety of mindfulness-based interventions built upon the use of meditation techniques used in mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR; Kabat-Zinn, 1990), such as mindfulness-based relapse prevention (MBRP; Marlatt & Gordon, 1985) and mindfulness-based treatment for eating disorders (Kristeller & Hallett, 1999).

DBT (Linehan, 1993) utilizes mindfulness skills for the treatment of borderline personality disorder. In DBT patients are taught mindfulness skills to help facilitate a balanced approach to emotions and distress. Despite strong empirical support for DBT (Ost, 2008), the mindfulness skills have not been partitioned out and incrementally investigated separate from the entire treatment package.

Similarly, ACT (Hayes et al., 1999) is an experiential treatment utilizing mindfulness interventions as part of a comprehensive treatment package designed to imbue psychological flexibility. Mindfulness in ACT is designed to foster acceptance, defusion from literal interpretation, self as context, and contact with the present moment (Fletcher & Hayes, 2005). ACT has empirical support for a wide array of disorders and conditions (Hayes, Masuda, Bissett, Luoma, & Guerrero, 2004; Ost, 2008; Powers, Zum...
Vorde Sive VOrding, & Emmelkamp, 2009) but, like DBT, mindfulness has not been dismantled from the larger treatment protocol.

MBSR utilizes formal meditation exercises including sitting meditations and hatha yoga in order to reduce the pathological forms of processing that exacerbate suffering associated with stress-related disorders (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). MBCT was developed to target cognitive vulnerability in depression. MBCT incorporates, as a central component, mindfulness training as utilized in MBSR and adds components of cognitive therapy (CT) for depression (Beck, Rush, Shaw, & Emery, 1979). Unlike standard CT, where the focus is on changing the content of thoughts, MBCT’s focus is on fostering meta-cognitive awareness of the reactive or ruminative processes that are empirically linked to depressive symptoms. Both MBCT and MBSR are manualized treatments consisting of eight 2-hour sessions, and they require 45 minutes of daily meditation practice.

Extensive research in the past 10 years has demonstrated that mindfulness has positive effects on the mind, body, brain, and behavior (Greenson, 2009). Several recent meta-analyses of MBCT and MBSR have supported the efficacy of these interventions for broadly impacting anxiety, depression, and stress (Baer, 2003; Greenson, 2009; Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt, & Oh, 2010; Ledesma & Kumano, 2009). Greenson’s (2009) review of 52 studies found that mindfulness interventions led to less emotional distress, higher compassion, improved health, decreased unhealthy behaviors, and increased stress-tolerance and that these changes are observable on a neurological level. Hofmann et al. (2010) found in a meta-analysis of 39 studies that MBCT and MBSR led to reductions in anxiety, depression, and stress in non-clinical, psychiatric, and cancer
patients. These meta-analyses update the earlier review and critique by Toneatto and Nguyen (2007), who found that, although mindfulness interventions are generating medium to large effect sizes, mindfulness as the active component of the intervention has not been adequately determined through stringent research design.

MBCT has demonstrated efficacy in reducing the rate of relapse for formerly depressed patients with three or more previous episodes of depression; the specific population it was designed to target (Barnhofer et al., 2009; Godfrin & Van Heeringen, 2010; Kuyken et al., 2008; Ma & Teasdale, 2004; Michalak, Heidenreich, Meibert, & Schulte, 2008; Segal et al. 2010; Teasdale et al., 2000). In three MBCT randomized controlled trials, relapse rates were consistently reduced from about 68% in treatment as usual to approximately 30% in the MBCT group (Godfrin & Van Heeringen, 2010; Ma & Teasdale, 2004; Teasdale et al., 2000). Additionally, MBCT has been extended to populations with current depression, treatment resistant depression, and residual depression symptoms, with positive results (Eisendrath et al., 2008; Finucane & Mercer, 2006; Kenny & Williams 2007; Kingston, Dooley, Bates, Lawlor, & Malone, 2007). MBCT has also demonstrated equal protection against further depression that is equal to the effect of medication management (Godfrin & Van Heeringen, 2010; Kuyken et al., 2008; Segal et al., 2010) and has demonstrated that in comparison to maintenance psychopharmacological therapy, MBCT participants have increased positive mood and improved quality of life at one-year follow up (Godfrin & Van Heeringen, 2010). MBCT has also been used to treat anxiety, with recent research showing reductions in anxiety, stress, and worry in clinically anxious patients (Evans et al., 2008; Kim et al., 2009).
In order to ascertain that mindfulness is the active component in these interventions, several studies have now included the measurement of mindfulness and have shown meaningful gains in mindfulness in MBCT and MBSR interventions (Anderson, Lau, Segal, & Bishop, 2007; Birnie, Speca, & Carlson, 2010; Branstorm, Brandberg, & Moskowitz, 2010; Carmody & Baer, 2007; Carmody, Baer, Lykins, & Olendzki, 2009; Carmody, Reed, Kristeller, & Merriam, 2008; Kuyken et al., 2010; Mathew, Whitford, Kenny & Denson 2010; Michalak et al., 2008; Nyklicek & Kuijpers, 2008; Shapiro, Astin, Bishop, & Cordova, 2005; Shapiro, Brown, & Biegel, 2007; Shapiro, Oman, Thoresen, Plante, & Flinders, 2008). Also, there is developing support that home practice has a meaningful impact on gains in mindfulness interventions (e.g. Carmody & Baer, 2007; Mathew et al., 2010; Ramel et al., 2004; Shapiro et al., 2008; Speca et al., 2000). However, practice rates continue to be below the recommended level and attrition in mindfulness studies continues to be above 20%, despite many of these studies being carried out in research settings (e.g., Branstrom et al., 2010; Ledesma, & Kumano, 2009; Nyklicek, & Kuijpers, 2008; Shapiro et al., 2005). It also should be noted that studies with larger sample sizes tended to produce positive findings for the mindfulness interventions, suggesting that some reported gains in mindfulness may rely on sample size to be able to detect smaller, and therefore significant changes, rather than reflecting clinically meaningful change (Hofmann et al., 2010). Nonetheless, mindfulness interventions, especially MBSR and MBCT, have become widely researched and supported interventions for a variety of psychological and health related disorders.
Rationale for a Synthesized Mindfulness

Despite initial support and enthusiasm for mindfulness, there may be benefit in expanding the definition and conceptualization of mindfulness. Mindfulness in current psychology has been defined as a construct validated through empirical comparison with western psychological variables, not through construct accuracy within a Buddhist context. As such, the interventions and practice instructions used to cultivate mindfulness, often borrowed from Buddhism, may lack conceptual cohesion. An empirical example of this is Carmody and Baer’s (2007) finding that, although mindfulness completely mediated change in pathological variables, it did not account for changes in well-being. This finding suggests that perhaps mindfulness interventions as used in the study are not focusing on increasing well-being and that mindfulness assessment is not conceptualized in a way that accounts for both reductions in pathology and increases in well-being. Furthermore, there is an inherent assumption in the empirical measurement of mindfulness that meditation experience or increase in mindfulness leads immediately to positive characteristics, and increases in mindfulness would be expected to demonstrate a linear relationship with measures of well-being (Baer et al., 2008). However, Kornfield (1979) stated that intensive insight meditation experience is not specifically designed to cultivate positive states, but rather to foster equanimity and non-attachment to the onslaught of affective, cognitive, and somatic experiences available in quiet reflection.

Mainstream psychology continues to equate mindfulness with the immediate collection of positive states, which may represent a cultural obsession with happiness (Harris, 2008), rather than a clear comprehension of growth as understood in Buddhism.
This lack of a clear mindfulness conceptualization has lead to incongruities in mindfulness interventions including unclear instruction, lack of attuned feedback, faulty expectations, and directions and interventions that do not prepare participants for meditative experience. Thus, high attrition and low practice rates in mindfulness interventions may be in part due to not preparing participants well for the rigors of sustained meditation and by creating unrealistic expectations for meditation.

The following three chapters will review Buddhist approaches to cultivating the intent to meditate, the importance of compassion and loving kindness for the development of mindfulness, and the ethical and moral supports for well-being. Each chapter also will review Western psychological knowledge regarding these areas, promoting a synthesis of Eastern and Western approaches to mindfulness and well-being cultivation.
Chapter 2. Setting the Frame for the Practice of Meditation

It is impossible to pour liquid into a vessel without some belief that, first, you are capable of pouring it, and second, the vessel can contain the liquid. An action as mundane as pouring liquid requires at least some degree of faith. Likewise, a beginner cannot pour the nectar of the teachings into the vessel of the mental continuum without faith. (Brown, 2006, p. 58)

The Buddhist Approach for Motivation to Meditate

The Beginning of the Path. In Buddhism, the decision to begin meditation is based upon a logical analysis of the nature and causes of suffering (Dalai Lama, 2001). The interest in meditation begins after one hears of the teachings and with an attitude of respect, admiration, and motivation, pursues further information and teachings (Brown, 2006). The beginning of training starts with a recognition of the value of the teachings, faith in oneself and the Buddhist teachings to potentate positive change, and an intellectual understanding of suffering and its causes. This initial reflection on suffering is designed to foster the motivation to meditate (Thrangu, 2003) and the early discussions of the necessity of cultivating mindfulness, developing equanimity, and feeling compassion help support the practice of meditation.

The emphasis on cause and effect is present throughout, as these initial exercises are designed to be the cause of respect for oneself and the teachings, motivation to practice, and faith in the eventual outcome of meditation practice (Brown, 2006). Motivation and recognition of the quality of the teachings is important, because it becomes a source of support as the practitioner faces the inevitable trials and difficulties of sustaining meditative practice. Buddhist scholars have acknowledged the difficulty of
intensive meditation and therefore encourage purposeful and diligent reflection in order to help establish a clear intent involving a sense of efficacy, hopefulness in change, and determination to persevere (Hart, 1987; Kornfield, 1979). Furthermore, the initial intellectual understanding of impermanence, selflessness, and suffering (the three marks of existence) are the focus of experiential exploration throughout meditative development and form the foundation of clear comprehension, an important component of Right Mindfulness (Payutto, 1988). In other words, the initial teachings and practice are setting the framework for developing wisdom through the development of mindfulness and providing the motivation and support to learn meditation.

Respect, faith, and hope. Respect for the teaching, the teacher, the practice, oneself, and the community is critically important in Buddhism. Brown (2006) indicates that respect and admiration directly imply an openness to receive teaching, thus a decision to leave behind pre-conditioned mental experience in favor of direct, present moment engagement with experience. Furthermore, respect facilitates the development of faith and confidence, both in oneself as capable of receiving teaching and of the teacher as providing worthy information (Brown, 2006).

Respect and admiration are often conveyed through reverence to a historical lineage of teachers, through an offering or prostration to a teacher, or through practice itself (Buddhadasa, 1976). In both the Theravada and Tibetan traditions, preliminary exercises emphasize cultivating respect and admiration for the teacher as well as the Buddhist teachings. In Tibetan traditions especially, the student considers their teacher as an enlightened being and may visualize their many beneficent qualities (Brown, 2006; Trungpa, 1973). Through the initial contact with a teacher and the teacher’s lessons on
mindfulness and the nature of suffering, motivation, faith in the outcome, and self-efficacy are generated. Furthermore, the Dalai Lama (2001) emphasized that this faith is generated not based upon hope or prayer but upon logical reasoning given the teachings of cause and effect. In Theravadan preliminary practices, the student may perform rituals submitting his or her own ego to the teacher and may be required to undergo hardship to demonstrate their dedication and openness to the teacher (Buddhadasa, 1976). However, these practices may also reflect cultural emphasis on respect for teacher and elders present in Asian culture (Aronson, 2004). Aronson discussed how the relationship between the teacher and the student is heavily influenced by culture and advocated for an appreciation for Western relationship norms in meditation. Buddhadasa emphasized that the spirit of the preliminary practices, rather than the explicit ritual practices, is more important than specifics of a given preliminary practice. Thus, initial homage to a teacher, the teaching, or historical figures of import help to orient the student to the spiritual qualities he or she wishes to develop as well as developing an openness to think and feel in different way. Given the cultural emphasis on individuality (Aronson, 2004) as well as the ambivalence about power and authority in contemporary Western culture (Mitchell, 1997), the meaning behind and the intended effects of the preliminary exercises will be emphasized.

The appropriate objects for faith in Buddhism are the teacher and the teachings (especially the doctrine of cause and effect). The role of faith is to dispel doubt and to provide self-reliance. Buddhists use stories of former teachers (e.g., of the Buddha or other arahants) as metaphors for the hardships of the spiritual life and how hardship is overcome. Respect and faith creates the possibility of “faithful recognition” (Brown,
which is an ability to recognize the difference between the excellence one
aspies to in a teacher or in teaching and the causes of suffering. The concept of “faithful
recognition” is the fruition of faith, whereby faith has been internalized and the student
can recognize the teachings in everyday life. Faith in itself, however, rests upon an
understanding of cause and effect and the causes of suffering and will be explained
below.

The First Two Steps. In the Southeast Asian Theravada traditions, the
preliminary practices of Right View and Right Intent are the first two steps of the
eightfold path (Thanissaro, 1997). Although not explicit in all texts, Theravadan authors
have also underscored the importance of the initial relationship with the teacher and the
importance of becoming open to the teachings. Similarly, in the Tibetan Mahamudra
tradition, the initial preparatory practices start with respect for the teacher and faith in the
teachings and “the four notions that turn the mind,” which share overlap with the
Theravadan approach. These two traditions will help elucidate how Buddhists orient to
the development of mindfulness and will be used in a complementary fashion to illustrate
the pre-meditation preliminary practices. Although many of the preliminary exercises are
often heavily ritualized in Buddhist practice, Buddhadasa (1976) emphasized that all
practices should be conducted with a clear understanding of the intent of the practice. The
intent of these initial steps is to create the same clear view and intent upon which later
mindfulness depends. In fact, the development of Right Mindfulness is to facilitate the
ability to remain in Right View and Right Intent (Thanissaro, 2005).

Right View. In the Theravada traditions, the many discourses on the first noble
truth, Right View, emphasize three main facets of Right View. They are the law of cause
and effect, the three marks of existence (impermanence, selflessness, and suffering), and reflections on suffering (Bodhi, 1998; Brown, 2006; Thrangu, 2003) Right View is the foundation of the Buddhist path because it facilitates the development of the other steps on the eightfold path. Right View, or Right Understanding, serves initially as the intellectual grounding for the rest of the path and is the basis from which faith in meditation as an antidote to suffering arises. In Tibetan traditions, the preliminary exercises are dubbed “the four notions that turn the mind” (Brown, 2006, p. 74), meaning that thinking about certain things logically turns the mind toward meditation and the Buddhist path. These are reflections on the precious opportunity of being human, the law of cause and effect, and the truths of impermanence and selflessness, and suffering (the three marks of existence; Thrangu, 2003). The goal of considering the four notions is an attitude change, whereby one becomes dissatisfied with pleasure based upon sensory events. Given the Buddhist theory that suffering is due to clinging to pleasure and avoiding pain, this initial attitude change is necessary for the motivation to cultivate mindfulness. Implicit in this worldview is the orientation to search for the roots of suffering inside the mind, because the determination of an event as wholesome or unwholesome is based upon the effect it has on the person (Thanissaro, 2005) given the reflections on the nature of causality in relation to suffering.

**Precious opportunity.** In the Tibetan Mahamudra tradition, Buddhists reflect on the opportunity humanity is afforded by comparing human existence with those of several other non-human or under-privileged humans. Ghosts, gods, animals, and disadvantaged or traumatized people are used not only as comparisons for reflection on one’s favorable position, but also as metaphorical examples of obstacles to spiritual practice (Brown,
These exercises are designed to have the practitioner cultivate an appreciation for the ability to practice meditation, while also learning to recognize the barriers that will arise from time to time. For example, each hell realm represents a specific barrier that will likely rise in meditation, and thus acts as a visualization exercise in recognizing the suffering involved in each barrier and how to return to mindfulness once such a barrier is experienced.

In order to counteract the obstacles to practice, the practitioner learns to reflect on the benefits she or he do have (e.g., born as human, born in land where truth is, health, meet a teacher, interested in the teaching) in order to facilitate a feeling of gratitude for his or her position (Sharma, 1997). Reflections on the precious opportunity afforded in the present moment is thus also an elaborate teaching on and visualization of the nature and causes of suffering, and motivates the practitioner to renounce lifestyles that lead to suffering.

Cause and effect. One of the most foundational tenets of Buddhism is the law of cause and effect (*kamma*; Bodhi, 1984). In the Abhidhamma as well as in Tibetan texts, contents of the mind are understood in terms of their relative causes and their effects. All momentary analysis of experience is considered in terms of the effects each experience will precipitate, and indeed reflection fosters the desire for moral action. Therefore, the law of cause and effect is also the first introduction to the notion of wholesome and unwholesome phenomena, because it is through the discernment of the effects of present moment experience that Right Mindfulness and wisdom are facilitated. “When we are mindful, we can see that by refraining from doing ‘this, we prevent ‘that’ from happening” (Hanh, 1993, p. 8). Right View, in terms of cause and effect, is the
understanding that unwholesome activities and states are inextricably linked to suffering whereas wholesome states will decrease suffering. The law of cause and effect teachings emphasize reflecting on past, present, and future behavior to help understand the effects one’s action has on the future and on his or her suffering. The result of these exercises is a desire to restrain from unvirtuous actions and can lead to regret and strong determination. This leads to a desire to take the precepts vow to follow ethical actions as sanctioned by the Buddhist community, or, in other words, to start cultivating the second noble truth, Right Intent.

The three marks of existence. The three marks of existence are impermanence (anicca), selflessness (anatta), and suffering or unsatisfactoriness (dukkha; Bodhi, 1998; Brown, 2006). Reflections on impermanence are designed to lead to a dissatisfaction with seeking happiness through inevitably impermanent objects, which leads to a dissatisfaction with conditioned sources of happiness (e.g., physically pleasurable events) and a desire to lead a more austere life. In order to understand impermanence, visualizations of one’s own death, the death of loved ones, and causes of death are utilized (Brown, 2006). These exercises also help the practitioner to not value the physical sources of identity and pleasure and to instead value present moment mindfulness.

In tandem with the understanding of impermanence, the selfless nature of experience is also emphasized. In Buddhism, the self is also seen as impermanent; specifically, the experience of the self is actually a changeable, co-arising condition with perceptual events. In the perception of an event, there is a certain sense mode that perceives an event and this is mistakenly taken to be the seat of the self. As meditative
experience and awareness deepens, the sense of self as a continuous experience radically changes (Brown, 2006). Thus, it is considered a perceptual error and a source of ignorance to regard oneself as an ongoing, stable entity, and practitioners are encouraged to reflect on their different selves, arising in different situations, and actually divisible down to perceptual processing (Engler, 1986 Varela et al., 1991). Reflections on suffering involve considering different types of suffering (sickness, aging, death, loosing valuable things, etc.) in order that the practitioner experience the suffering caused by each type of attachment and aversion.

**Right Intent.** Right Intent is a motivation to apply the understandings of Right View by intending to renounce acts that lead to suffering and cultivate virtuous, compassionate, and kind actions (Bodhi, 1998). Right Intent can also be translated as Right Thought, because it implies an effortful, conscious, thinking process with the specific intent to reduce suffering and increase happiness (Bodhi, 1998; Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). Through the contemplation of quality of the Buddhist teachings, the causes of suffering, and the three marks of existence, the motivation to engage in meditation is fostered, and formal ethical vows are performed (Brown, 2006). Brown emphasized that renunciation of harm-causing behaviors (by taking the ethical precepts) is not caused by an external mandate, but rather due to logical analysis of the causes and end of suffering. The outcome of the maturation of Right View and Right Intent is the desire for the enlightened mind, which motivates formal meditation practice and the desire to cultivate kindness and compassion (Brown, 2006; Thrangu, 2002).
Western Psychological Perspectives on Change

The initial Buddhist exercises for increasing motivation have considerable overlap with psychological understandings of the change process and also offer some unique perspectives. From a psychological perspective, the task of this stage of meditation development is to increase hope, foster a sense of self-efficacy, establish a theoretical rationale for the practice, and to build motivation to change and meditate. The focus of this section, processes and predictors of change, outside of the motivational interviewing (Miller & Rolnick, 1991) and stages of change literature (Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992), is one of the least well articulated areas of psychology and is ripe for exploration. Because of the lack of clear emphasis in psychology on the relationship between intent and change, collateral research and psychological perspectives on intent, motivation, hope, determination, and suffering will be presented to explore evidence for a Buddhist informed change protocol.

Intent. Wallace and Shapiro (2006) suggested that “conative balance” (p. 693) development in mindfulness involves the cultivation of intent and commitment related to specific goals and outcomes. Without this intentional goal-setting and commitment, which is stronger than just imagination or hopefulness, complex behavior and goal-directed activities cannot take place. The authors pointed out that the Buddhist practices of the four notions of turning the mind help to remedy obstacles to practice and motivate intentional action. Furthermore, they pointed out that Buddhist practices help facilitate contentment by emphasizing an internal locus of intervention, hearing stories of exceptional individuals in the past, and becoming discontented with the current tendency
to suffer. Wallace and Shapiro (2006) went so far as to suggest that the benefits of mindfulness will not be reaped without a clear intent and motivation for the practice.

**Stages of Change.** Buddhist teachings designed to create a desire to meditate can be viewed from a transtheoretical perspective (TTM; Prochaska et al., 1992) in that the targets of the intervention are to prepare individuals to solidly and effectively move from the precontemplation and contemplation stage to the action stage. In fact, the Buddhist model of change encourages contemplation and reflective goal-setting, so that the action, meditation, and mindfulness cultivation are congruent with the supportive intent and understanding. The presence at meditation group likely represents at least a beginning motivation to change, and the aforementioned Buddhist interventions help provide a framework to explain suffering and ways to alleviate it, encouraging the move from contemplation into action. Additionally, the Buddhist change framework also is congruent with stages of change by raising consciousness about the nature of suffering, providing relief in the form of hope, encouraging environmental re-evaluation by emphasizing interdependence and compassion, offering social liberation through the transformation of compassion, and encouraging the application of insight to personal behavior (Prochaska et al., 1992).

TTM is complex and encompassing, including both internal stages and processes of change, and recent meta-analyses have cited difficulty with treatment fidelity in assessing the efficacy of TTM; however, the general model of stages of change has received support (Hutchison, Breckon, & Johnston, 2008; Noar, Benac, & Harris, 2007). In recent critiques (e.g., West, 2005), authors have argued that discrete stages of change do not account for relapse behavior; however, the utilization of the stages of change for
increasing motivation to change has proved effective (Noar et al., 2007). Thus, the Buddhist emphasis on cultivating Right View and Right Intent may function similarly to the processes identified as necessary for all behavior change in TTM.

**Motivation.** The importance of client motivation and intent for change has been emphasized by Prochaska et al. (1992) and Miller and Rolnick (1991). Considering that cultivating mindfulness is a unique, often not culturally congruent experience, motivation building and intent clarification specifically tailored to a mindfulness intervention may facilitate openness and learning. A “Buddhist consistent motivational interviewing” type intervention may facilitate increased mindfulness skill, decrease attrition rates, and increase practice times in already established mindfulness based interventions.

When the above interventions are considered from the perspective of motivational interviewing (MI: Miller & Rolnick, 1991), the Buddhist approach to motivation bears similarity to this intervention. MI involves five goals for therapists encouraging client change: express empathy, develop discrepancy, avoid argumentation, roll with resistance, and support self-efficacy (Miller & Rolnick, 1991). By recognizing that all human beings are destined to suffer, there is empathetic attunement with the teacher, the student, and other sentient human beings. Furthermore, the usage of the trials and difficulties of former masters helps the student feel that his or her struggles are similar to the struggles of those who have come before them. The reflections on cause and effect and the nature of suffering inherently brings discrepancies between the person’s stated intent to reduce suffering and their actual suffering-inducing activities. Resistance is not necessarily elicited, because the individual is encouraged to self-reflect and use his or her own experience as the experimental testing ground. Lastly, self-efficacy is supported with the
positive notions and exercises of cause and effect, impermanence, and precious opportunity. MI interventions have broadly been found to increase healthy behavior (Rubak, Sandbaek, Lauritzen, & Christensen, 2005). Hettema, Steele, and Miller (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of 72 clinical trials involving MI and found that, although there is evidence that MI improves outcomes in addictions interventions and increases treatment adherence, the evidence was inconsistent. The authors did find that effect sizes were largest when MI was added to a treatment as usual intervention, suggesting that the benefits of MI were related to the improvement in adherence and retention. Thus, increasing motivation and intent to practice may be a key component to increasing the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions.

**Hope.** Research on hope theory (Snyder et al., 1991) has demonstrated that hope and self-efficacy are predictive of a wide range of positive indicators (Snyder, Lopez, Shorey, Rand, & Feldman, 2003). Similar to MI, hope theory emphasizes the necessity of having goals, strategies for pursuing goals, and the capacity for agency to meet goals in order for positive change to occur. Research on this model has shown that agency and self-efficacy are uniquely important in the attainment of goals (Feldman, Rand, & Kahle-Wrobleski, 2009) and that hope has a stronger (negative) relationship with dysphoria than does negative thinking or coping (Chang & DeSimone, 2001). In students, higher levels of hope are related to self-esteem and competence, better academic and athletic performance, and several markers of positive relational abilities (Snyder et al., 2003). Furthermore, interventions increasing hope via goal setting, behavioral planning, and positive self-talk have proved effective (Snyder et al., 2003).
The Buddhist system for cultivating motivation is very consistent with hope theory, and likely could be expected to yield similar results. Classified as faith within the Buddhist system, the initial instilment of hope via clarification on how suffering relates to mindfulness, stories of how former masters persevered, and the relationship with the teacher is an important component of the Buddhist intervention and is recommended to be a initial component of mindfulness interventions. Similar to how it is presented in Buddhism, initial interventions could include discussions of the value of mindfulness, an emphasis on cause and effect and the ability to change, and anecdotal stories of mindfulness successes. Furthermore, visualizations of the precious opportunity of the present moment are a unique way to increase hope and efficacy as well as gratitude for current opportunities, and there is noteworthy research on happiness that a grateful attitude facilitates well-being (Emmons & McCullough, 2003).

**Determination.** Determination and motivation are important parts of meditation practice; however, this has been largely overlooked in mainstream psychology. Anecdotal reports of meditation experience actually suggest that early experiences are not calm and tranquil, but a shocking realization of how wild and distraught the mind is (Hart, 1987). In a qualitative study of the experiences of mindfulness meditators at two-week and three-months retreats, Kornfield (1979) found that, in addition to the expected experiences of rapture, peace, love, and insight, common reported experiences included dramatic mood swings of intense positive and negative emotions. Thus, a meditator must have a certain foundation of determination and faith in order to maintain a mindful disposition through difficult affective experiences. These anecdotal experiences suggest that intensive insight meditation experience is not specifically designed to cultivate
positive states, but rather to foster equanimity and non-attachment to the onslaught of affective, cognitive, and somatic experiences available in quiet reflection. Furthermore, Monteiro and Musten (2009) suggested that helping clients to understand that their symptoms will not last, are not always immediately changeable, and not a reflection of self-worth helps support a desire and willingness in clients to experience their internal world.

Furthermore, meditation is rigorous:

Another surprise is that, to begin with, the insights gained by self-observation are not likely to be all pleasant and blissful. Normally we are very selective in our view of ourselves… But Vipassana meditation is a technique for observing reality from every angle. Instead of a carefully edited self-image, the meditator confronts the whole uncensored truth. Certain aspects of it are bound to be hard to accept. At times it may seem that instead of finding inner peace, one has found nothing but agitation by meditating. (Hart, 1987, p. 7)

Thus, Western authors have begun to appreciate the rigors of meditation, and to explore ways to increase motivation to practice and determination in the presence of unpleasant meditation experiences. For example, Monteiro and Musten (2009), suggested that teachings regarding impermanence and impersonality may facilitate determination in meditation interventions.

Reflections on Suffering and Creative Hopelessness. Reflections on the futility and effect of behavior driven by clinging and aversion to inherently impermanent and unsatisfactory phenomena, the core of Buddhist teachings on suffering, is akin to engendering a sense of creative hopelessness in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
(ACT: Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999). In this intervention in ACT, the therapist encourages the client to reflect on the effect his or her past attempts at experiential and cognitive control has had on his or her overall well being, with the outcome ideally being an ego-deflating recognition that his or her known strategies for pursing well-being have not worked. Similarly, the Buddhist teachings on suffering and the three marks of existence, instructs that habitual experience is rife with causes of suffering and that seeking pleasure from the physical senses or ego defined means is ultimately bound to increase suffering (Dalai Lama, 2001). In this way, these teachings encourage students to dig deep into their experience, via meditation, to root out the ways their ignorance (of the three marks of existence) and ego clinging continues at very subtle levels.

**Recommendations for Integration**

Thus, the suggested addendum to mindfulness interventions selects several of these Buddhist principles for cultivation of intent to meditate in a way consistent with established psychological interventions that support motivation to change. It is suggested that the personal intent of the practice is emphasized in early meditation practice and is linked to a clear understanding of mindfulness, the relationship between mindfulness and suffering, and hope for the cultivation of mindfulness. Additionally, the law of cause and effect, precious opportunity, and compassion will be introduced to help create motivation and determination to practice meditation. In introducing mindfulness to clients in a way that is congruent with a Buddhist understanding of mindfulness and its development and that is palatable to a Western audience, several objectives are developed: to clarify the intent behind the practice; to introduce the law of cause and effect and the notion of impermanence; to increase hopefulness, efficacy, and motivation; and to sow the seeds of
how mindfulness and wisdom relate to decreased suffering. The specific suggestions are presented in Chapter 5.
Chapter 3. Loving-Kindness and Compassion

The Buddha said ‘Anyone who has one quality can become a Buddha. What is that one quality? Compassion.” (Thrangu, 2002, p. 12)

Compassion and Loving-Kindness in Buddhism

The previous chapter emphasized clear comprehension as a support of mindfulness development. This chapter will emphasize the attitudinal aspects of mindfulness: acceptance of, kindness towards, and openness to present moment experience. As outlined in Chapter 1, the Abhidhamma definition of mindfulness explicitly contextualizes mindfulness as a wholesome mental event, which co-arises with equanimity, non-greed (generosity), loving-kindness, self-respect, respect for others, faith, tranquility, lightness, malleability, wieldiness, proficiency, and rectitude (Olendzki, 2008b). Furthermore, the presence of any unwholesome factors in present moment experience, such as delusion, shamelessness, fearlessness of wrong, restlessness, greed, wrong view, conceit, hatred, envy, avarice, worry, sloth, torpor, and doubt, prevent mindfulness from arising (Olendzki, 2008a; Wallace, 1999; 2008b). Therefore, in order to potentiate the arising of mindfulness, skillful means of handling the negative thoughts and feelings are utilized and positive states such as equanimity, kindness, and compassion are cultivated (Salzberg, 1995; Wallace, 1999).

One such method of generating wholesome states and counteracting and reducing unwholesome states are the practices of loving-kindness and compassion reflections, meditations, and visualizations. In the cultivation of compassion, the distinction is made between loving-kindness and compassion. In Buddhism, loving-kindness (metta), or more literally friendliness (Wallace, 1999) or love (Salzberg, 1995), is the desire for happiness
and well-being. Salzberg (1995) explains that the two roots of the word metta are “gentle” and “friend,” indicating that metta is like a supportive friendship with oneself and life in general. It is the heartfelt wish and desire for happiness. Compassion (karuna) is the desire to be free from suffering and misery. It is the capacity to see and empathize with pain without losing strength or hope. Salzberg (1995) defined compassion as “experiencing a trembling or quivering of the heart in response to a being’s pain” (p. 132). Despite this distinction, many authors (e.g., Dalai Lama, 2001; Trungpa, 1973) refer to compassion as the broad desire for happiness and freedom from suffering. In this chapter, compassion as an umbrella term will be considered an aggregate for loving-kindness and compassion, unless the more specific terms are defined.

**Compassion as an Antidote for Suffering.** In Buddhism, negative emotions are inherently self-defeating. As Wallace (1999) stated “…hatred is a disease. It pains us.” (p. 101). Based upon the Abhidhamma explanation that the arising of negative emotions inherently prevents the arising of mindfulness and wholesome states, negative thoughts and emotions are by definition counterproductive because they cause misery: “You may or may not get around to injuring the other person, but as soon as hostility arises in the mind, you’re already damaging yourself, and so in a sense you’re accomplishing the task of the enemy” (Wallace, 1999, p. 102). Furthermore, in lacking compassion and experiencing negative feelings towards others, ignorance is generated and perpetuated, because there is a violation of the tents of Right View, namely selflessness, interdependence, and cause and effect.

When the goal of mindfulness practice is considered to be the establishment of wholesome states and well-being, it becomes clear that anger, hatred, greed, and the other
negative feelings are counter-indicated and must be skillfully reduced in order to facilitate the arising of positive states. From a Buddhist perspective the root of negative emotions and suffering is ignorance and a lack of compassion and kindness (Salzberg, 1995). Compassion exercises are predicated upon the understanding of the futility of negative emotions and a desire to cease them. Thrangu (2002) suggests that to the degree one cannot feel compassionate about oneself and others, suffering exists:

> We ordinary beings are not now able to establish sentient beings in the rank of Buddhahood. What is the reason why we are not able to do that? It is because our minds are afflicted in various ways. To whatever extent our minds are afflicted, to that extent we are unable to help other sentient beings. (p. 19)

Thus, the skillful means of handling negative emotions relies on compassion and is established by an understanding of interdependence and selflessness. Specifically, the component of Right View related to the development of compassion is the understanding that all beings have the exact same desire for happiness and freedom from suffering as oneself and that all beings are emotionally interrelated in their search for well-being (Dalai Lama, 2001). As in all Buddhist exercises, Right View is considered the ability to see reality clearly and then meditation practice and mindfulness help the application of wisdom, in this case compassion and kindness, to daily action at all levels of experience.

**Selflessness and Interdependence as the Basis for Compassion.** Compassion for oneself and others is predicated on the Buddhist philosophical understanding of interdependence (Wallace, 1999). “What unites us all as human beings is an urge for happiness, which at heart is a yearning for union, for overcoming our feelings of separateness” (Salzberg, 1995, p. 26). Given that the aim of Buddhist practice is to
eradicate delusion and ignorant understanding of the world, one source of delusion is the separation of oneself and others. Wallace (1999) pointed out that the notion of selflessness and the understanding of interdependence are the same in their basic nature, as they both view conscious experience as a function of ever-changing dependent circumstances rather than evidence that a self is a separate, discrete identity: “Our very sense of who we are is itself a dependently related event” (p. 14). Because the perception of having a separate, identifiable self (as opposed to the experience of self being an emergent property of experience) is inherently a false view, compassion and loving-kindness exercises also start to erode (or extend) the boundaries of self-experience by increasing the domain of compassionate love (Salzberg, 1995). Thus, the practices of loving-kindness and compassion are in a reciprocally supportive relationship with a clear understanding of mindfulness and the lack of a real, discernable self. This understanding is fostered through analytic meditations focusing on interdependence of all beings and the nature of suffering (Tulku, 2002). With this understanding, the logical distinction between friends and enemies is seen as a wrongly held view, and one tries to establish compassion for oneself and others.

The root of compassion and loving-kindness is equanimity, and equanimity is developed by visualizing friends and loved ones as well as enemies and hated people and developing an equal desire for oneself, cared about others, strangers, and enemies to be happy and free of pain, irrespective feelings of attachment and hatred (Dalai Lama, 2001; Tulku, 2002). Connoted in metta is a sense of acceptance and love:

Metta--the sense of love that is not bound to desire, that does not have to pretend things are other than the way they are--overcomes the illusion of separateness, of
not being part of a whole. Thereby metta overcomes all of the states that accompany this fundamental error of separateness--fear, alienation, loneliness, and despair--all of the feelings of fragmentation. (Salzberg, 1995, p. 26)

The analytic meditations and contemplations on interdependence often begin with reflections of the ways all beings have been the recipient of love and hate from others and the effect this has on one’s experience (Dalai Lama, 2001). The Dalai Lama pointed out that because humans are affected by one another’s emotions and actions, all people are interconnected and inseparable. Therefore, the seed of compassion is the recognition of the kindness bestowed upon oneself by others. Buddhists view all beings as interdependently related throughout time (Dalai Lama, 2001). The distinction between friends or enemies, the experience of hatred or animosity, is considered delusional in that these emotions are based upon a faulty understanding of emotions and relationships with others. Tibetan Buddhists specifically use analytic reflection on interdependence to cultivate compassion (Sharma, 1997). Specifically, the practitioner considers how all beings are similar in their desire to be free of suffering and happy, the interconnectedness of human interactions via reflection on his or her relationship with his or her mother and other positive relationships, and the impact of having enemies on his or her well being (Sharma, 1997). These reflections are designed to foster a desire to be a more compassionate person, engendering a desire to create “the mind of awakening” (Tulku, 2002, p. 19), which provides a strong foundation for developing mindfulness. Another exercise uses a visualization of the various kinds of suffering for different beings in order to understand and have compassion for the many different types of pain sentient beings can experience (Dalai Lama, 2001).
**Emphasis on compassion in different Buddhist schools.** The role of compassion in broader spiritual development is to a degree dependent on the school of Buddhism. For example, in Theravada traditions compassion can be seen to a large degree as the product of mindfulness, in that as one lessens his or her selfish identification with his or her own experience, he or she cannot help but become more interconnected and compassionate to other sentient beings. Thus, compassion exercises are often utilized after formal mindfulness training (Wallace, 1999). In contrast, the Mahayana Buddhist traditions of Tibet focus on compassion training prior to the practice of formal meditation, explicitly focusing on the *bodhisattva vow*, the intent to practice for the benefit of all beings, as a foundation of any practice. Thus, meditations of *bodhichitta*, or compassionate intent, precede formal meditation experience (Thrangu, 2003). Regardless of the initial focus, both traditions emphasize that each aspect of concentration, wisdom, and compassion must be equally developed for the complete dissolution of suffering. Where they differ is on the entry point into the wheel of experience. Because Buddhism is generally oriented towards goals larger than simply the cultivation of mindfulness, many contemporary Buddhist clergy and scholars have emphasized the importance of compassion in terms of these larger goals (Thrangu, 2002). Although Theravadan sources emphasize compassion and kindness (e.g. Hanh, 1990), primarily Tibetan sources are used below.

In the initial stages of meditation in certain Tibetan traditions (e.g., Mahamudra), emphasis is placed upon developing compassion and the awakened mind, or the desire to become enlightened (Dalai Lama, 2001; Thrangu, 2002). Indeed, in Tibetan Buddhism, reflections on compassion and a desire to eradicate ill will or negativity for oneself and others is the primary motivation for meditation practice. Thrangu (2002) described
compassion as a naturally arising consequence of the mind of awakening. Because the end goal of Buddhist practice is the experience of peaceful and kind experiences (and the elimination of suffering), the various forms and causes of suffering are to be understood and eliminated. The roots of equanimity are linked to compassion and loving-kindness, and exercises and visualizations are utilized to develop compassion (Dalai Lama, 2001). Discourses on the law of cause and effect and the nature of suffering can give rise to motivation for practice of meditation, for virtuous action, and for the cultivation of compassion (Brown, 2006; Dalai Lama, 2001). The law of cause and effect dictates that, due to consequences of previous actions and current ignorant actions, unwholesome states will continue to arise from time to time, and compassion is necessary as a skillful means of transforming ethically negative feelings into positive states, thus facilitating the cultivation of mindfulness (Wallace, 1999).

**Self-Compassion.** In Buddhist practice, loving-kindness meditations start with visualizing oneself being the recipient of care and kindness in order to create a desire to be happy, and beginning compassion exercises focus on fostering a personal desire for freedom from suffering and the causes of suffering (Dalai Lama, 2001). Salzberg (1995) quoted the Buddha as saying, “You can search throughout the entire universe for someone who is more deserving of your love and affection than you are yourself, and that person is not to be found anywhere” (p. 31). Methods for developing self-compassion in Buddhism include meditating on the desire to free from suffering (Wallace, 1999) and encouraging acceptance of self-experience by meditating “as if” all the qualities of an enlightened being were already present (Brown, 2006).
Wallace (1999) and Salzberg (1995) have pointed out that due to cultural and philosophical differences between Western and Eastern cultures, more emphasis may need to be placed on self-compassion in Western audiences. In this regard, Chogyam Trungpa (1973) focused his teaching on compassion for Western students almost exclusively on self-compassion. Wallace (1999) related an anecdote from a meeting with the Dalai Lama in which the Dalai Lama could not comprehend the idea of disliking oneself because the idea is foreign to Tibetan culture. Thus, he recommended building loving-kindness and compassion for oneself before considering other beings (Wallace, 1999).

**The Cultivation of Loving-kindness and Compassion.** “What do we mean when we speak of a truly compassionate kindness? Compassion is essentially concern for others’ welfare- their happiness and their suffering. Others wish to avoid misery as much as we do” (Dalai Lama, 2001, p. 52). The Dalai Lama suggested imagining that all beings had been one’s friends or one’s mother in previous lives in order to begin to cultivate a sense of relatedness and closeness to all beings. Reflections on the desire all sentient beings share for happiness and freedom from suffering, and therefore are similar to oneself, accompany exercises recognizing the interdependence and interrelatedness of all beings (Dalai Lama, 2001). Exercises utilize visualizations of people who are experienced as neutral, beloved and emotionally close, and others who are disliked and hated in order to work on cultivating equanimity, loving-kindness, and compassion for all beings. Emphasis can be placed on the experience of receiving compassion and kindness by remembering the kindness bestowed upon oneself by one’s caregivers (Dalai Lama,
or by imagining receiving compassion and kindness from an admired or beneficent other (Wallace, 1999).

**Loving-kindness meditations.** Tsong-Kha-Pa (2004) advocated cultivating loving-kindness in three steps: see all beings as the one’s mother, recollect kindness given to you by your mother, and develop a wish to repay this kindness. As mentioned above, this practice is predicated on an understanding of interdependence and to a certain degree a belief in reincarnation. For Tsong-Kha-Pa “The result of these three steps is a love that considers living beings to be beloved, just as a mother considers her only child. This love gives rise to compassion” (p. 32). In order to cultivate loving-kindness, the Dalai Lama (2001) advocated considering the unhappiness of friends, neutral people, and enemies and examining specifically how they lack happiness and offering them one’s happiness and love. The cultivation of kindness typically involves imagining loved ones and friends, people towards whom one has neutral feelings, and then enemies, and extending feelings of loving-kindness and a genuine desire of well being until all three types of people are experienced as equal (Wallace, 1999). The practitioner actively wishes for their happiness by repeating phrases focusing on their happiness and well-being.

**Compassion meditations.** The format for the development of compassion is similar to the development of loving-kindness in that the focus starts upon oneself and moves outwards towards others; the desire for freedom of suffering and pain is first applied to people who that feeling is to a certain degree already available and then in steps extended towards all beings. Thrangu (2002) suggested that in order to cultivate compassion for others suffering, one begins by considering the pain of various types of
non-human beings, loved ones, neutral people, and then one’s enemies. This exercise is designed to allow one to slowly view all beings as equally deserving of compassion and kindness to eradicate selfish and false boundaries between oneself and others. Wallace (1999) emphasized that in cultivating compassion through these exercises, it is important to be able to understand and focus on the suffering of others in a heartfelt way, without falling into grief, sadness, or hopelessness. Furthermore, Wallace suggested that when blocks to compassion and kindness are present, reflections on impermanence, selflessness, and interdependence are utilized in order to establish a desire for compassion.

**Western Psychology and Compassion**

Multiple areas of research support the incorporation of self-compassion and loving-kindness exercises into established mindfulness-based psychotherapies. Several loving-kindness meditations have been researched (Carson et al., 2005; Fredrickson et al., 2008; Hutcherson et al., 2008; Johnson, Penn, Fredrickson, Meyer, Kring, & Brantley, 2009) and have received nascent empirical support. These interventions have largely been based upon Buddhist exercises (e.g., Salzberg, 1995), and thus the presentation of loving-kindness as the ability to foster a desire for happiness for oneself and others is consistent across Buddhism and Western psychology (Carson et al., 2005; Fredrickson et al., 2008) despite the philosophical differences in the function of the practice. Compassion research has been mainly focused on self-compassion, which is considered the ability to be kind towards oneself including an understanding of the universality of internal experience (Neff, 2003b). Western psychologists have largely focused on the development of self-compassion using Buddhist interventions (e.g. Gilbert & Irons, 2004). Therefore, this
chapter presents empirical research on interventions similar to Buddhist meditations, as loving-kindness and compassion interventions have been developed using explicitly Buddhist meditations. However, the rationale for incorporating loving-kindness and compassion exercises has been based on research on positive emotions and has not directly been incorporated into mindfulness interventions.

The interest in positive emotions has been a relatively recent development in psychology (Frederickson, 1998), and there are relatively few clinical interventions that specifically target the development of positive states (Hutcherson, Seppala, & Gross, 2008). There are, however, several tested theories on the importance of positive emotions, including compassion and love for overall well-being (i.e., Fredrickson, 1998). The recent developments in positive psychology have been a shift away from the specific focus in clinical psychology on pathology, and the research below gives additional support for the integration of interventions that include the cultivation of positive states. These two areas of research will be briefly reviewed to elucidate how Buddhist conceptualizations of loving-kindness and compassion may dovetail with psychological theory.

**The Importance of Positive Emotions.** The incorporation of interventions that increase positive emotions may be an important part of general well-being, because mindfulness is not designed to reduce negative emotions per se, but to rather change the way internal events are experienced (Segal et al., 2002). The experience of positive emotions leads to flexible, open, adaptable information processing and behavioral responding and the experience of negative emotions leads to attention restriction, processing biases, and behavioral repetition (Fredrickson et al., 2008; Neff, 2003a).
Fredrickson’s (1998) Broaden and Build Theory (BBT), positive emotion and affect are the ends and means for well-being. In BBT, positive emotions increase and build on psychological resources, signal to continue in behaviors, decrease the effects of negative emotions, increase resiliency to stress, and help to mitigate future threats to well-being imposed by life challenges. Among the positive emotions, Fredrickson (1998) posited that love includes the emotions of interest, contentment, and joy and involves savoring and playing with loved others. Thus, love is a strongly positive amalgamation of positive states known to be predictive of well-being (e.g., interest, joy, savoring, play).

Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, and Schkade (2005) note that the achievement of intentional, personally relevant goals and acts of generosity and kindness have been proved to be predictive of short- and long-term positive emotions. Additionally, expressing gratitude and reflecting on positive circumstances has been found to be associated with increases in reports of well-being (Emmons & McCullough, 2003).

**Research on Loving-Kindness Interventions.** Fredrickson’s research on the importance of positive emotions has led to several clinical studies utilizing Buddhist loving-kindness meditations (Fredrickson et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 2009). Fredrickson et al. (2008) conducted a study on the effects of loving-kindness meditation, congruent with the loving-kindness meditations described above, on positive and negative affect and satisfaction with life. Fredrickson et al. (2008) also measured the development of positive personal resources, which are defined as “mindfulness, pathways thinking, savoring the future, environmental mastery, self-acceptance, purpose in life, social support received, positive relations with others, and illness symptoms” (p.1054). This intervention increased positive affect, personal resources, and satisfaction with life, but no effect on
negative emotions was found. Consistent with BBT, it is specifically the accessibility of positive emotions and their effect on personal resources that leads to overall gains in satisfaction with life. Furthermore, Fredrickson et al. (2008) demonstrated that loving-kindness produces a cumulative effect on positive emotions, such that over time the effect of the meditation on positive emotions increased. This suggests that it is not the experience of positive emotions per se that leads to well-being, but rather that positive emotions facilitate the development of personal resources (cognitive, affective, behavioral, and physical), that leads to an increased satisfaction with life. Another important finding in the Fredrickson et al. study is that the loving-kindness group initially had lower levels of positive emotions and had a high initial attrition. The authors speculate that this is consistent with Buddhist beliefs that a novice practitioner is laden early in the practice with feelings of doubt and pessimism about the practice as a result of initial insight into internal challenges (Kornfield, 1979). This phenomena is akin to the difficulty in starting an exercise regimen, whereby initial motivation also leads to initial difficulty or acknowledgement of the state of affairs (Fredrickson et al., 2008). Thus, attrition in mindfulness practices and interventions may be decreased by initial interventions that help build the frame for the practice, including the cultivation of intent, faith, and positive expectation in the practice.

Carson et al. (2005) utilized a modified loving-kindness meditation for individuals with chronic back pain to target feelings of anger and resentment. The explicit goal of the study was to increase participants’ feelings of compassion and empathy and decrease feelings of anger. The study was based upon the gate theory of pain, which posits that negative feelings increase pain. The intervention was eight 90-minute sessions,
including group processing and discussions and at-home audiotaped exercises. The meditations were based upon Salzberg’s (1995), and, they focused on the affective nature of sending loving thoughts and feelings to oneself, care about others, and eventually others whom initially the participants were ambivalent about. Clients were also encouraged to practice at home. The loving-kindness intervention in this study led to a significant within-group reduction in multiple types of pain and general psychological distress over time. Furthermore, the authors found that there was a direct relationship between time spent practicing loving-kindness and anger and pain, such that practicing predicted same-day reductions in pain and following-day reductions in anger. It is worth nothing that both the aforementioned studies (Carson et al., 2005; Fredrickson et al., 2008) had high attrition in the treatment conditions. The authors of both studies suggested using interventions to increase intent and positive expectations prior to beginning the mediations.

Hutcherson et al. (2008) conducted a brief loving-kindness intervention study to measure the effects of loving-kindness meditation on mood and positive feelings towards others. Their intervention consisted of a 7-minute loving-kindness meditation based on Salzberg’s loving-kindness meditation (1995). The authors found that the intervention increased participants mood more so than a matched neutral imagery control and that the increase in mood accounted for the additional change in positive feelings towards pictures of strangers. Furthermore, the changes in mood accounted for changes in explicit mood responses but had no effect on measured implicit associations. It is possible the effect on implicit level associations would need more than a 7-minnute intervention.
Thus, loving-kindness interventions have been shown to increase positive mood (Fredrickson et al., 2008; Hutcherson et al., 2008), decrease anger (Carson et al., 2005), and increase satisfaction with life (Fredrickson et al., 2008).

**Self-Compassion.** Neff (2003a) has defined self-compassion to include kindness and understanding towards oneself, a view of one’s experiences as an example of inevitable human experience rather than individual, isolating misgivings, and a mindful balance of experiencing internal events without over identifying with them. The construct was developed to be distinct from self-esteem, which usually involves social comparisons or self-evaluation based upon external validation and attainment (Neff, 2003a). Neff (2003a) emphasized the reciprocal relationship between self-compassion and mindfulness, in that mindfulness facilitates the ability to experience internal events more objectively and has the potential to increase a feeling of interconnectedness, and self-compassion can support the development of mindfulness by decreasing judgmental self-assessment and decreasing the impact of negative emotions. Furthermore, Neff (2003b) developed a self-compassion measure and in the validation study found that self-compassion was negatively related to anxiety and depression and positively related to life satisfaction. In addition, Neff (2003b) found that the aforementioned relationships were statistically significant even when controlling for the related construct of self-esteem. Furthermore, self-compassion has been shown to be positively correlated to meditation experience (Neff, 2003b).

Recent evidence also suggests that MBSR interventions increase self-compassion, and that gains in self-compassion are directly related to gains in mindfulness (Birnie, Speca, & Carlson, 2010; Shapiro et al., 2005; Shapiro et al., 2007). This suggests that
gains from meditation may be in part due to the cultivation of mindfulness but also due to increases in self-compassion, which is consistent with a more holistic, Buddhist approach. Inconsistent support for the impact of mindfulness interventions on empathy has been found. Two studies utilizing MBSR have shown no gains in empathy for others (Birnie et al., 2005; Galantino, Baime, Maguire, Szapary, & Farrar, 2005) and one study demonstrating that an MBCT intervention increased empathetic concern, but not empathetic perspective taking, in psychology graduate students (Mills, 2010). These inconsistent findings may suggest that self-compassion and compassion for others are two distinct constructs and need to be developed independently and sequentially, as described in Buddhism.

Gilbert and Irons (2004) developed a program to improve the capacity for self-compassion and in a sample of people high in self-criticism. Specifically, Gilbert, Baldwin, Irons, Baccus, and Palmer (2006), argued that many non-responders to cognitive therapies are not affectively soothed by the cognitive, rational material presented in therapy: “When people try to generate alternative cognitions and appraisals to self-critical thoughts and images, they need to feel them to be supportive and helpful, otherwise people suggest they can see the logic, but this has little emotional impact” (Gilbert et al., 2006, p. 186). Gilbert et al. (2006) argued that the capacity to self-sooth may have strong mediating effects in many forms of therapy, and that imagery exercises may uniquely provide access to individually relevant compassionate images and affective states. Gilbert and Irons thus created a novel compassionate imagery visualization exercise to increase the capacity to generate positive, self-soothing images. Their study
demonstrated that it was possible to increase the ability to create and access compassionate affective and cognitive material through visualization trainings.

Extending the exploratory work of Gilbert and Irons (2004), Gilbert and Procter (2006) developed a mind training technique to help shame prone clients develop self-compassion. The Compassionate Mind Training (CMT) as presented by these authors utilizes positive visualizations and internalizations of qualities of acceptance, empathy, and compassion to increase clients’ ability to self-sooth. Clients developed ideographic compassion ideals, and visualization of expressing and receiving positive emotional support were utilized. Initial results with a small sample of individuals with chronic shame and negative attitudes about themselves showed that CMT increased self-soothing and decreased anxiety, depression, external shame (feeling judged by others), and self-criticism at the end of the 12-week intervention. Thus, visualization and internalization of a compassionate object (very specifically defined) may help provide clients stability and the framework necessary to start more in-depth mindfulness work. The authors noted that an initial mindfulness of the breath exercise proved difficult for this population and instead suggested starting with gross physical sensations.

**Suggestions for Integration**

Loving-kindness and compassion exercises have been shown to foster the development of positive emotions, and positive psychology research has demonstrated that access to positive emotion is an important component of successful and meaningful goal development (Fredrickson et al., 2008). Furthermore, there is recent evidence that self-compassion and mindfulness may both be meaningful outcomes of meditation, and that more specific compassion exercises and reflection could enhance mindfulness.
intervention outcomes (Birnie et al., 2010; Shapiro et al., 2005; Shapiro et al., 2007).
Thus, it is recommended that loving-kindness and compassion exercises, both analytic contemplations on the relationship between suffering and compassion and meditations of loved ones and compassion, can be utilized to support the development of mindfulness. Wallace and Shapiro (2006) proposed that one of the benefits of Buddhist practice, specifically the cultivation of compassion, loving-kindness, joy, and equanimity, is the development of emotion-regulation skills. Emotion regulation, although helpful in its own regard, is also an important skill that supports the determination to meditate despite the presence of difficult emotions. The incorporation of exercises to cultivate loving-kindness for oneself and others is hypothesized to increase mindfulness development and to increase motivation to practice in mindfulness interventions.

Suggestions for integration are to: (1) introduce compassion and gratitude earlier in mindfulness-based interventions, (2) discuss compassion as helpful in developing the self-acceptance and non-judgment aspects of mindfulness, (3) emphasize early desire for well-being and happiness as roots of strong determination to develop mindfulness, and (4) discuss the rationale for self-compassion and compassion as it relates to the interdependence of emotional experience. The specific suggestions and interventions for incorporating compassion and loving-kindness are further detailed in Chapter 5.
Chapter 4. Cultivating Morality and Virtue

When we are mindful, we can see that by refraining from doing “this”, we prevent “that” from happening. (Hanh, 1993, p.8)

Morality in Buddhism

The role of ethical and moral actions in meditative development has been contentious in Buddhist history and has largely been absent from the current psychological conceptualization of mindfulness. Throughout Buddhist history, there have been two competing perspectives on ethical behavior. Whitehill (1994) and Sam van Schaik (2003) contrasted these two positions at the “satori perspective” or sudden enlightenment approach, represented by the Vajrayna and Zen schools, and the “virtue perspective” or gradual enlightenment approach, found in Theravada and Mahayana schools of Buddhism. The distinction between these two schools of thought was formalized by the 8th-century debate between the Chinese monk HwaShang Mahayana and the Indian monk Kamalashila (Dalai Lama, 2001; Keown, 2005; Thrangu, 2002; Tsong-kha-pa, 2004; Van Schaik, 2003). The debate between the two Buddhist masters was on whether virtuous intent is necessary for enlightenment (Thrangu, 2002).

HwaShang advocated for ethical relativism in Buddhism, positing that all thoughts, virtuous or not, lead to karmatic remainders; that is, perpetuate cyclic existence (Tsong-kha-pa, 2004). HwaShang used the metaphor of all intent acting like a rope that ties up the mind: “It is like the being tied up with a golden rope or with an ordinary rope, like white or dark clouds covering the sky, or the pain from being bitten by a white or a black dog” (Tsong-kha-pa, 2004, p. 87). This argument bears similarity to the definitions of
mindfulness as “bare-attention,” leaving out any intentional or ethical implications, and has been refuted as incompletely emphasizing virtue necessary for spiritual development:

    The ‘satori perspective’ characteristically over-emphasizes the ‘awakening’ dimensions of Buddhist soteriology, to the detriment of the moral, ‘virtuous’ dimensions. Consequently, a view of the Buddhist virtues from this standpoint tends insistently to relativize and diminish the virtue’ in the *sumnum bonum* of ‘awakened virtue,’ until there is only the ‘Awakened One,’ beyond good and evil. (Whitehill, 1994, p. 6)

This position was “defeated” by Kamalisa, who emphasized the entirety of the Buddhist path, refuting the idea that the goal of the path is broader than “stabilizing the mind in a state that lacks any thought” (Tsong-kha-pa, 2004, p. 88). The Dalai Lama (2001), commenting on the treatises by Kamalshila, writes that calm-abiding concentration is developed by adhering to moral codes and is necessary but not sufficient to eliminate disturbing emotions. He writes that “special insight,” which is experiential insight into selflessness, impermanence, and the law of cause and effect, is applied to experience in order to eradicate afflictive emotions and reciprocally support ethical moral conduct and concentration (Dalai Lama, 2001). In this chapter, I have drawn heavily on the work of Kamalashila (Dalai Lama, 2001; Sharma, 1997; Thrangu, 2002).

This position advocates for the application of mindfulness and concentration to discern wise action from unwholesome in order to reduce suffering. This position therefore supports ethical behavior that restricts the engagement in unwholesome states. The texts created by Kamalashila (Dalai Lama, 2001; Sharma, 1997) became foundational for Tibetan Buddhism and specifically fostered the necessity for compassion
(Thrangu, 2002). Whitehill (1994) further emphasized the ethical position stating, “…to act like a Buddha means something other than becoming spontaneous, inventive, and free of Victorian inhibitions. The practice of awakened virtue in Buddhist communities requires diligent learning of the forms in and through which one can perform like an awakened virtue being” (p. 13).

From this perspective Buddhist practice is largely predicated on a moral and ethical code for living happily and the eradication of mental functions that perpetuate suffering (Olendzki, 2008a). Unlike Christian traditions where the morality and ethical codes are a deity mandate, in Buddhist practice moral and ethical codes are adhered to as prerequisites for the ability to maintain concentration and defilement-free awareness (Bodhi, 1981). Recently, many Buddhist scholars and clergy have emphasized the ethical and moral aspects of Buddhism and mindfulness (e.g., Olendzki, 2008a), and suggest that ethical and moral actions are the “most concrete expression of mindfulness” (Hanh, 1993, p. 10). As emphasized in Chapter 1, many Buddhist conceptualizations of mindfulness involve a wholesome (i.e., ethical) aspect that reflects an objective and central aspect of Buddhist theory: “One who accepts the principle that our volitional actions possess a moral potency has, to that extent, grasped an important fact pertaining to the nature of our existence” (Bodhi, 1984, p. 21).

Based on a definition of mindfulness as a wholesome occurrence (Olendzki, 2008a; Wallace, 2008), an emphasis on the importance of ethical action and the role of virtue in Buddhist mindfulness development will help increase the repertoire of interventions in mindfulness interventions. This chapter will discuss the relationship between Buddhist ethics and mindfulness development, morality, ethics, and virtue as
defined in Buddhism, the philosophical and epistemological basis for ethical behavior in Buddhism, the practices for increasing virtue (or morality), and psychological perspectives and research on morality and ethics. Reed (1993) commented that Western conceptualizations of freedom involve freedom to get whatever one wants and that, in contrast, Buddhist freedom involves freedom from suffering by adhering to certain guidelines. Indeed, rather than emphasizing obedience or constraint, Buddhist commentaries have equated morality to harmony or coordination (samadhana; Bodhi, 1984). Given this difference and subsequent lack of emphasis on Buddhist ethical principals in psychological constructs of mindfulness, an exploration of the importance of ethics in Buddhist mindfulness development is warranted. Ethics and morality have received scant attention in the psychological literature, and a discussion of the philosophical differences between Buddhist and Western ethical perspectives will help differentiate Buddhist ethics from Western conceptualizations of ethical action.

**Relationship Between Morality and Mindfulness.** Bhikkhu Bodhi (1984) considers moral discipline to be the foundation of the Buddhist path in that cultivating wholesome dispositions develops attention and wisdom and unifies the capacity for attention on wholesome thoughts, speech, and action. Mindfulness training facilitates the abilities to be diligently aware of the contents of the mental continuum and to respond to internal and external events in a way that facilitates wholesome states and wisdom (Bodhi, 1984; Brown, 2006). In Theravada writings, the separation of mindfulness from ethical actions, concentration, and wisdom is absent (Hanh, 1993). Mindfulness not only is facilitated by ethical action, but mindfulness is also useful for the discernment between wholesome and unwholesome actions; namely, actions that cause suffering (Dalai Lama,
The rationale for eliminating unwholesome actions is based upon an understanding of cause and effect, which is explicitly ethical: “The law connecting actions with their fruits works on the simple principle that unwholesome actions ripen in suffering, wholesome actions in happiness” (Bodhi, 1984, p. 19). By restraining (viratiyo) from unwholesome actions, motivations and dispositions that lead to suffering will be exposed and can be eradicated (Bodhi, 1984; Wallace, 1999).

The cultivation of concentration, mindfulness, and wisdom involves identifying and restraining from thoughts and behaviors that are unwholesome (Dalai Lama, 2001; Wallace, 1999). Wisdom and concentration are required to be able to mindfully determine wholesome (non-harmful) action from unwholesome action. Wisdom is developed through mindful attention to the causes of suffering in all ego-driven actions (Hanh, 1993). Restraint both requires and facilitates mindfulness, and is termed “to stop leaking” (ansvara: Hanh, 1993, p. 8) of attention towards afflictive and suffering-producing states. Due to the training designed to realize the suffering perpetuated through craving and aversion, indulgence in ephemeral pleasures must be given up by the serious devotee. Before formal meditation practice commences, individuals develop moral and ethical training to help set the foundation and mental stability necessary for intensive meditation and concentration practice. Brown (2006) similarly considered the ethical trainings as “building a stable vessel” (p. 113) in the mind to contain and support the development of wisdom. Morality and ethics are interrelated and core components of Buddhist practice and mindfulness development, that support and are reciprocally supported by the concentration and wisdom components of the eightfold path (Dalai Lama, 2001).
The ethical codes are best understood as guidelines designed to offer insight into cause and effect; that is, the goal is not to “perfect” the self through ethical action, but rather to gain insight into the causes of suffering through reflection on actions and their consequences (Hanh, 1993). In this way, Reed (1993) considered the precepts “an expression of the whole Dharma” (p. 99). Bhikkhu Bodhi (1984) emphasized that the deeper effects of the ethical trainings take place not on external behaviors, but on the effects on the mind. Based upon the Buddhist theory of behavioral conditioning and determinism (cause and effect), Bodhi (1984) stated that the ethical trainings bring “the personal benefit of mental purification” (p. 41) that allows for freedom from future unwholesome effects and motivations, increasing the ability for mindfulness. Thus, similar to the previous chapters, the rationale for moral and ethical adherence rests upon and provides insight into the law of cause and effect and the cause of suffering the Right View components of the Buddhist eightfold path that both inform and are the fruit of Buddhist practice (Bodhi, 1984).

**Ethics in the Eightfold Path and the Five Precepts.** Ethical and moral behavior, and correspondingly virtuous behavior, are presented most formally as the three ethical (sila) aspects of the eightfold path and through the five precepts (pancasila; Bhikku Bodhi, 1981). Ethical actions are also mentioned in the codes for ethical behavior for monks (vinaya), but refer more the maintenance of a harmonious spiritual community than to the importance of wholesome, ethical intent and behavior for enlightenment (Keown, 2005; Prebish, 1996). There are also more exhaustive lists of ethical behaviors (eight precepts, 10 precepts, etc.) and several areas of virtue (10 transcendences and immeasurables) (Wallace, 1999), all of which overlap with *sila* and *pancasila* as well as
compassion and loving-kindness from the previous chapter. This chapter will focus primarily on *sila* and *pancasila*; however, the virtuous counterparts will be given brief mention (Keown, 2005).

**Sila.** Morality (*sila*) is of central importance, presented as three of the eight aspects (Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood) of the eightfold path that comprise the core Buddhist teachings (Keown, 2005; Nyanaponika & Bodhi, 1999). The typical presentation of the eightfold path starts with the two wisdom aspects, followed by the three ethical aspects, then the three concentration aspects (Bodhi, 1981, 1984; Brown, 2006). Although the entire eightfold path is reciprocally cultivating, this sequence is based upon the premise that Right View and Right Intention give rise to the motivation for Right Speech, Action, and Livelihood, which give cause for the arising of Right effort, Mindfulness, and Concentration (Bodhi, 1984; Brown, 2006; Thanissaro, 1996).

Right Speech (*samma-vaca*), Right Action (*samma-kammanta*), and Right Livelihood (*samma-ajiva*) are the three steps of the noble eightfold path that comprise the ethical aspects (*sila*; Bodhi, 1984). Right Speech is defined as abstaining from lying, slander, abusive speech, and idle chatter; Right Action is defined as abstaining from killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct; and Right Livelihood is abstaining from violent or unlawful employment and abstaining from business in weapons, human beings, meat, intoxicants, and poison (Bodhi, 1984; Thanissaro, 1996, 2001). Brown (2006) emphasized that the decision to begin following the *sila* precepts and take refuge vows is a natural outcome of the cultivation of Right Intent. After careful consideration of one’s own life experience, the causes of suffering, and the possibility of change, an adept
becomes motivated to follow the precepts, because to do otherwise would be to continue creating pain and misery through habitual, falsely informed actions.

_Sila_ trainings aim to cultivate inner virtue, which is expressed through outward actions of body and speech, and are in harmony with the rules of conduct (Bodhi, 1981). The _sila_ trainings involve three components: abstaining from unwholesome actions, deeds, and thoughts; cultivating wholesome and virtuous intents and actions; and the purification of the mind (Bodhi, 1984). In this way ethics and morality in Buddhism are not just prohibitive of specific actions, but also proscriptive of positive, virtuous action (Bodhi, 1984; Brown, 2006; Hanh, 1993; Keown, 2005; Wallace, 1999). Bhikkhu Bodhi (1984) noted that although the _sila_ trainings are usually presented in terms of abstinence or restraint from unwholesome action (_viratiyo_), they also advocate for a commitment to the performance (_caritta_) of wholesome deeds. Bhikku Bodhi (1984) used the translation of _sila_ as “moral discipline” and noted that both restraint and performance relate to Right Conduct.

Although _sila_ refers to the abstinence of unwholesome actions and speech and the cultivation of virtuous wholesome qualities, the Abhidhamma equates _sila_ with the mental factor on abstinence (_viratiyo_), reinforcing emphasis on training the mind, not on the specific action (Bodhi, 1984). The abstinence aspect is usually emphasized, because it temporally precedes and sets the foundation for the other virtuous and transformative aspects (Brown, 2006). Bhikkhu Bodhi (1981) advocated for the linear development of virtue, beginning with restraint and abstinence from unwholesome actions and ending with the cultivation of virtuous qualities. This development is often equated to gardening, with restraint and abstinence related to removing rocks and weeds from a garden bed and
practicing virtue and compassion being analogous to watering and providing sunlight to a plant (Bodhi, 1981; Brown, 2006).

**Pancasila.** Thich Nhat Hanh (1993) emphasized the foundational importance of the *sila* precepts, or *pancasila* (Keown, 2005), to the point of actually calling them “the five mindfulness trainings” (Hanh, 1993, p. 8). Hanh stated that the change from precepts to mindfulness trainings makes this necessary concept more palatable to a Western audience and underscores the importance and opportunity of using the *pancasila* training for cultivating mindfulness. This section will present the each of the precepts in terms of the restraint aspect as well as the performance aspect. Additionally, some translations refer to the positive, performance aspect ethical precepts as the “virtue precepts” (Keown, 2005).

The five precepts are formal commitments made by lay practitioners when one becomes a Buddhist in the Theravada and Mahayana schools. Just as meditation is the way to practice the concentration aspect of the eightfold path, the precepts are the ways to observe the *sila* components of the eightfold path (Keown, 2005; Thanissaro, 2005). They are commonly presented as abstaining from taking life, abstaining from taking what is not given, abstaining from sexual misconduct, abstaining from false speech, and abstaining from fermented and distilled intoxicants which are the basis for heedlessness (Bodhi, 1981). Hanh’s (1993) presentation of the *pancasila*, which he calls “the five mindfulness trainings” to emphasize their relationship with mindfulness, includes reference to the awareness of suffering cause by violating each precept, the positive determination to cultivate the virtues associated with each, and determination to abstain from violating the precept. Thus, he presented the precepts in their positive form as
reverence for life, generosity, sexual responsibility, deep listening and loving speech, and mindful consumption (Hanh, 1993). The corresponding virtue for each is compassion, loving-kindness, responsibility and integrity, truthfulness, and health (Hanh, 1993).

**Virtues.** Ethical and moral restraint in Buddhism are related to and followed by the cultivation of virtue (Bhikkhu Bodhi; 1981; Hanh, 1993; Brown, 2006; Keown, 2005; Wallace, 1999). The cardinal virtues of non-attachment (*araga*), benevolence (*advesa*), and understanding (*amoha*) counteract unwholesome dispositions (*klesa*; Keown, 2005). Virtues are discussed in Theravada Buddhism in *brahma-viharas*, the four immeasurables or the “divine abidings” of loving-kindness (*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), sympathetic joy (*mudita*), and equanimity (*upekkha*; Wallace, 1999) and in Mahayana Buddhism as the six perfections (*paramita*) of generosity (*dana*), morality (*sila*), patience (*ksanti*), perseverance (*virya*), meditation (*samadhi*), and insight (*prajna*) (Brown, 2006; Keown, 1996, 2005). Several of these virtues have been reviewed in previous chapters and sections (i.e., loving-kindness, compassion, and morality). Although an exhaustive discussion of the virtues and their role in Buddhism is not relevant here, they are mentioned to reinforce the Buddhist conceptualization of morality as involving both a restraint from unwholesome and an engagement in wholesome deeds (Keown, 2005; Hanh, 1993).

Thus, some translations of *sila* include overt reference to the precepts as virtue practice (Kewon, 2005), because ethical restraint allows for the cultivation of virtuous, wholesome experience, a necessary transformation for Buddhist spiritual development (Bodhi, 1984; Brown, 2006). Restraint from unwholesome deeds of body, speech, and mind eradicates the sources of unwholesome motivation and the cultivation of virtuous
motivations increases the wholesome dispositions, which ripen into spiritual development and happiness (Bodhi, 1984).

**Western Philosophical Perspectives on Buddhist Ethics**

From a philosophical perspective, Buddhist ethics are universal (objective) and virtue-based, or non-moral (Keown, 2005; Whitehill, 1994). Buddhist ethics are considered universal because the causes of suffering are considered the same for all people, across all time (Keown, 2005). Using the terminology of Holmes (1993), Buddhist ethics are normative or objective (i.e., reflect presupposed factual information about the world, cause and effect). Buddhism rests upon a philosophical foundation of an objective reality, with laws of nature that dictate the causes of suffering (Dalai Lama, 2001; Keown, 2005). For Buddhists the “correctness” or “Rightness” of (ethical) actions is determined by their resultant effect on suffering in accordance with the objective principles of cause and effect (Bodhi, 1984; Reed, 1993).

Ethics of virtue are “traits that make up excellence of character” (Holmes, 1993, p. 58) and Keown (1996) argues that Buddhism emphasizes the psychological sources of moral action. Bodhi (1984) emphasized that Buddhist morality differs from the obligation and constraint orientation in western ethics, but rather emphasizes an intrinsic, virtue-based approach. Consistent with this approach, it is the psychological character of the person that is transformed through virtuous action: “Virtue ethics seeks a transformation of the personality through the development of correct habits over the course of time so that negative patterns of behavior are gradually replaced with positive and beneficial ones” (Keown, 2005, p. 23). Buddhist ethics emphasize the transformative nature of ethical actions; that is, the benefit of ethical action is seen in the effect it has on the
character of the person, not necessarily on the external reality. Furthermore, consequences are determined by non-personal laws of cause and effect and therefore are unsuitable as foci for ethical action (Keown, 1996). Thus, the benefit of ethical actions is internal purification and the development of a virtuous character, which prevents and diminishes unwholesome motivations from disrupting the establishment of wisdom, mindfulness, and concentration (Bodhi, 1984).

**Western Psychological Perspectives on Morality and Buddhist Ethics**

Interestingly, psychology has been largely silent on the role of ethical and moral living in mental health (Doris & Stich, 2008). One notable exception in the field of clinical psychology is the incorporation of values and committed behaviors in the service of values in acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT: Hayes et al., 1999). ACT perhaps uses more Buddhist preliminary practices relative to any contemporary mindfulness-based psychotherapy. The ACT foundation of functional contextualism, refers to the philosophical position that usefulness is more important than objective truth, and usefulness is determined by pragmatically determining the degree to which “truths” support the accomplishment of subjectively determined purposes (Hayes, Strosahl, Bunting, Twohig, & Wilson, 2004). Emphasis is on pragmatic truth; that is, on the way thoughts about facts or truths are used to support subjectively determined values and goals. In their incorporation of values, ACT does not refer to an objective code of conduct that leads to more effective living, but rather utilizes values to activate perseverance in the face of adversity (Hayes et al., 2004). Thus, in the Buddhist system, ethical conduct reflects a philosophical position not currently incorporated in psychology; that is, as an objective anchor for the application of mindfulness. This does serve a
similar function as values in ACT (i.e., a source of “remembrance” in times of turmoil),
but also offers an objective model of suffering (i.e., clinging and aversion to
impermanent, impersonal events and objects as a source of self-identity), whereas values
in ACT are individually based and personally relative (Hayes et al., 2004).

For the most part, the incorporation of mindfulness into psychology has been in
the context of ethical neutrality. However, despite the ethical relativism of current post-
modernistic American culture, several authors have begun to advocate for the inclusion
of ethical precepts into formulations for well-being (Monteiro & Musten, 2009; Olendzki,
2008a; Wallace, 2008).

For example:

In its current usage, to be mindful of the moment includes being aware of
negative emotions, thoughts or actions without articulating the intention of such
an awareness. Whereas that is a useful starting point, to develop clear
comprehension of mindfulness, it is neither complete nor beneficial to stop there
because it does not carry the skill of being mindful to its intended outcome of
wholesomeness in speech, thought, and action. (Monteiro & Musten, 2009, p. 1)

Reviewed below is psychology research that supports the integration of ethical
and moral interventions in mindfulness treatments. Positive psychology research on
character virtues has demonstrated the positive relationship between character strengths
and subjective well-being. Also presented is scholarship and research on the
incorporation of ethical practices in mindfulness interventions and the relationship of
internal values and mindfulness to well-being. Taken together, this research supports
presenting mindfulness as supportive of and supported by virtuous, ethical actions and intent.

**Research on Virtues and Character Strengths.** The conceptualization of virtues and their relationship to well-being has received significant recent attention in positive psychology (see Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). Peterson and Seligman (2004) hypothesized that the six virtues of wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence are super ordainately related to 24 character strengths, and they developed the Virtues in Action Inventory to measure virtues and character strengths. Research with hundreds of thousands of adults and adolescents in over 50 countries and all 50 states has supported the notion of universal character strengths (Biswas-Diener, 2006; Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2006; Peterson, Ruch, Beermannm, Park, & Seligman, 2007). These are broadly identified as perseverance or temperance, wisdom or intellect, justice, and humanity (Brdar & Kashdan, 2010; Macdonald, Bore, & Munro; 2008; Shryack, Steger, Krueger, & Kallie, 2010) and they have been linked to increased well-being, satisfaction with life, and a sense of meaningfulness (Brdar & Kashdan, 2010; Part et al., 2004; Peterson et al., 2007). The virtuous factors of temperance, wisdom, justice, and humanity identified by positive psychology research (Shryack et al., 2010) share considerable conceptual overlap with the aforementioned Buddhist virtues of restraint, wisdom, and compassion.

Interventions designed to increase expression of character strengths by focusing on identifying and increasing the expression of five character strengths and decreasing character deficits have resulted in participant increases in satisfaction with life and decreases in depression (Rust, Diessner, & Reade, 2007; Seligman et al. 2005). Thus,
positive psychology research on virtues supports the Buddhist emphasis on cultivating virtue and offers several interventions for increasing virtuous behavior and satisfaction with life.

**Psychological Interventions Using Buddhist Ethics.** Recently two Buddhist-informed interventions have been developed that utilize Buddhist ethics as a core component of the intervention (Avants & Margolin, 2004; Monteiro, Nuttall, & Musten, 2010).

**Mindfulness-based ethical actions.** In the spirit of facilitating ethical behaviors in a way that supports well-being rather than appears as a limitation of freedom (Brown & Kasser, 2005; Reed, 1993), Monteiro et al. (2010) developed a mindfulness-based intervention that includes ethical training according to Hanh’s (1993) formulation of the five Buddhist ethical precepts. They utilized the Buddhist ethical framework to help clients determine what constitutes Right action and to set the foundation for mindful action. Within each domain of mindfulness (body, emotional, sensations, and thinking), the curriculum emphasizes actions that support mindfulness and equanimity. The ethical precepts are utilized as skillful habits that support the ability to be mindful and reduce suffering for oneself and others. Through the intervention, behavioral correlates of each ethical principal are idiosyncratically established by the participants and monitored throughout the week. Consistent with a virtue-based ethical approach, ethical values are translated from prohibitive (“no killing”) to proscriptive (“cultivate life”), and related to the domain of mindfulness for that week (i.e., cultivating life in the body or using the body for generosity by helping someone). Monteiro et al.’s (2010) work serves as an excellent template for the integration of mindfulness and the ethical precepts in a clinical
setting and for creatively finding ways to advocate for Buddhist ethical behavior to a Western audience. No empirical evidence yet exists for this intervention package.

**Spiritual self schema.** A second recently developed Buddhist integration treatment package is Spiritual Self Schema (3S: Avants & Margolin, 2004). 3S was developed to reduce impulsivity and risk behavior in HIV-positive clients struggling with substance issues. Avants and Margolin (2004) stated that the goals of 3S are for individuals to become aware of their “addict self-schema” to the full extent of the associated thoughts, feelings, impulses, actions, beliefs, and actions and to develop an alternative spiritual schema with an equally rich associative network, which is developed and reinforced throughout the intervention. 3S is developed along the classic Buddhist distinction of the eightfold path into three parts: wisdom, ethics (morality), and concentration (mastery of the mind).

In the wisdom portion of the intervention, the “addict model” of addiction as a habit pattern of the mind is presented as an unworkable way to cultivate happiness. In the ethical training portion of 3S, the interventions are centered around the precepts with the intent of reducing harm to self and others, and presented in terms of “addict speech,” “addict livelihood”, and so forth. “Transgressions” of the precepts are utilized as exploration of the addict self with the explicit goal of understanding the self-schema to increase awareness and choice. The concentration or mastery-over-mind aspect of the path is facilitated by the development of right effort, mindfulness, and concentration. Right effort is explicated using the 10 spiritual perfections or virtues (*paramis*), including generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, effort, tolerance, truth, strong determination, selfless love, and equanimity.
Preliminary research on this intervention supports its effectiveness in reducing impulsive behavior (Margolin et al., 2007), increasing positive values (Avants, Beitel, & Margolin, 2005; Margolin, Beitel, Schuman-Olivier, & Avants, 2006; Margolin et al., 2007), and decreases in risk behavior (Avants et al., 2005; Margolin et al., 2006). This novel and comprehensive treatment approach demonstrates that an emphasis on Buddhist ethical actions and virtue can be incorporated into mindfulness treatments in a way that is palatable to Western audiences.

**Internal values, Well-being, and Mindfulness.** Brown and Kasser (2005) examined the role of mindfulness (MAAS) and the source of values orientation (internal vs. external) in the prediction of subjective well-being and environmentally responsible behavior. The impetus for this research is the common perception that pro-environmental behaviors require sacrifice and a decrease in autonomy and thus well-being (e.g. Reed, 1993). This research bears relevance to the Buddhist premise that compassionate, non-harming behavior (in this case, pro-environmental behavior), though not directly personally beneficial, promotes well-being.

The authors found that contrary to the “sacrifice” notion of pro-environmental behavior, there was a positive relationship between environmental behavior and subjective well-being, and that both these categories were positively related to having intrinsic value systems (Brown & Kasser, 2005). In a follow-up study, the authors sought to further explain this relationship using mindfulness as a variable, and found that mindfulness and intrinsic values simultaneously support well-being and environmental behavior. This relationship highlights the importance of mindfulness, internal or intentional actions oriented toward oneself, and the positive relationship between well-
being and pro-environmental behaviors. Translating pro-environmental behaviors into Buddhist ethical codes of not causing harm, this research lends support to interventions that facilitate growth in these three domains: mindfulness, intrinsic orientation, and valued behavior.

**Suggestions for Integration**

The Mindfulness Ethical Actions and 3S models demonstrate that mindfulness-informed treatments can be extended to include Buddhist ethical precepts, can be palatable to a Western audience, and can be effective. Although there support for the consistent endorsement of similar character traits across nationalities, Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, and Schkade (2005) advocated that interventions to increase character strengths will be most effective if the strengths targeted are personally meaningful and desired. This is consistent with Brown and Kasser’s (2005) research emphasizing the importance of an internal orientation to value driven behavior for positive outcome. Thus, ethical actions will be presented in a way consistent with Monteiro et al.’s (2010) approach to link ethical, positive actions to Hanh’s (1993) virtue-based translation of the five precepts. Furthermore, in congruence with the Buddhist progression for motivation to perform ethical behavior (Brown, 2006), analytic understandings on cause and effect will help instill wisdom, which support the desire to restrain from unhappiness-causing actions and engage in actions which support happiness. Following through on Lyubomirsky et al.’s (2005) suggestions, the domains of behavioral restraint and engagement will be idiosyncratic, although designed to promote the virtues reflected in the five precepts. This intervention will therefore build upon previous interventions
which have emphasized ethical action, but have not been incorporated into mindfulness interventions.
Chapter 5. Suggestions for a Encompassing Mindfulness Intervention

Western psychologists have sought to understand, operationalize, and harness the benefits of Buddhist meditation, leading to an incredible outpouring of interest in mindfulness. This interest has surged over the past 15 years and mindfulness has been isolated from the larger Buddhist path for spiritual development, and interventions and assessments have sought to define and quantify mindfulness as a construct. Psychological research on mindfulness has demonstrated that it is a unique, trait, frame of mind related to a variety of well-being indicators, sensitive to meditation intervention and is applicable to a wide range of psychological disorders (Baer et al. 2008; Brown & Ryan, 2003). Mindfulness interventions have been introduced and thoroughly researched and show considerable promise for the treatment of cognitive and affective disorders (Greenson, 2009). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that gains in mindfulness through meditation-based interventions have meaningful relationships with outcome variables (i.e. Kuyken et al., 2010; Shapiro et al., 2005).

However, the construct of mindfulness as used in psychology is not directly equivalent to the mindfulness construct present in Buddhism, and this discrepancy has led to two unfortunate consequences. First, most mindfulness assessment measures have been developed by Western psychologists using psychological theories of mindfulness. Therefore, many of these measures were created with a eye toward statistical methods to determine construct validity rather than congruence with Buddhist theory. This has led to a lack of coherence in mindfulness formulation and possibly to inconsistent findings for multi-faceted measures (e.g., FFMQ), where factors do not relate as hypothesized (Baer et al., 2008). Further, research with Buddhists (e.g. Christopher, Christopher et al., 2009)
and meditators (Davis et al., 2009; Van Dam et al., 2009) has demonstrated that the facets of mindfulness tapped by these measures are not consistent across meditators and non-meditators, Buddhists and non-Buddhists, which suggests that the construct validity of these measures is questionable.

Second, interventions for the cultivation of mindfulness reflect this difference in their approach to mindfulness development. Buddhist practices provide a wide-ranging, scaffold approach to the development of well-being, of which mindfulness is one component. Alternatively, there has been a rapid delimiting of mindfulness interventions in mainstream psychology, despite the existence of additional exercises supporting mindfulness in both Buddhism, exercises that have recently received empirical support (e.g., Avants & Margolin, 2004).

Mindfulness in psychology has been broadly and consistently defined as involving a present-moment focused attention, with an attitude of kindness and acceptance towards ongoing experience (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Whereas the attention and attitude components of mindfulness have received significant attention, the intent of the practice or the rationale for the motivation to practice has been largely ignored. Likewise, interventions specially increasing an accepting kind attitude (e.g., compassion), and behaviors that support mindfulness have received little or no empirical exploration (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). Mindfulness operationaliztions and the related measures have largely focused on the attentional (e.g., MAAS) and the non-judgmental attitude (e.g., FFMQ) components of mindfulness; however, the roles of compassion, loving-kindness, and a wholesome intention have received less attention, despite their importance to the development of mindfulness in Buddhism. In order to explore the benefits of some of the
other Buddhist practices, a handful of recent interventions have incorporated loving-kindness, appreciation of ethical actions, and virtuous behaviors, and have yielded positive results (Avants et al., 2005; Carson et al., 2005; Fredrickson et al., 2008).

Thus, given that mindfulness in Buddhism is part of a congruent and comprehensive approach to mental and emotional change it is possible that incorporating Buddhist intellectual foundations for mindfulness, loving-kindness interventions, and emphasis on supporting mindfulness with ethical behaviors, will enhance the effectiveness of current mindfulness interventions. Thus, the intervention presented in this dissertation integrates existing mindfulness-based interventions with Buddhist concepts such as intent, ethics, informed and related psychological concepts.

The need for a reconsideration of how to best encourage mindfulness development is supported by accumulating evidence that mindfulness assessment interventions have high attrition, low treatment adherence, and questionable theoretical congruence (Barnstorm et al., 2010; Carmody & Baer, 2007; Christopher, Christopher et al., 2009). It is hypothesized that by incorporating the broader interventions in Buddhism that motivate and encourage mindfulness meditation, attrition will decrease, and practice rates and the subsequent effectiveness of mindfulness interventions will increase.

In this chapter, suggestions for the addition of a two-session intervention designed to precede currently developed mindfulness interventions (e.g., MBSR and MBCT) are presented. Broader suggestions for a more Buddhist congruent presentation of mindfulness are also provided. Because mindfulness interventions are often tailored for the needs of specific populations (e.g., Shapiro et al., 2005), and because these initial interventions will affect how the remainder of the sessions are structured (i.e., member
introductions and mindfulness introduction typically takes place in Session 1 of MBCT, but would now be redundant), the suggestions are provided in terms of applying the principles and research reviewed in the previous chapters, and not in a manualized format; however, a suggested outline for the framework of this intervention is provided in Appendix E.

**Foundations for Mindfulness: Intent and Understanding**

For the purposes of this intervention, mindfulness is presented as an innate, occasionally occurring mental state, that is inherently wholesome (e.g., non-aggressive, caring, open, receptive, non-judgmental), and the frequency of which can be increased through certain mental and behavioral practices, such as meditation and ethical behavior. In this definition mindfulness is characterized as a trait-like phenomenon and it is consistent with the Abhidhamma definition referenced by Olendzki (2008a) and is supported by Brown and Ryan’s (2003) research. This approach shifts away from mindfulness as something that is “done” to more of an experience that is cultivated. The concise definitions of mindfulness as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4) and "mindfulness is the application of pure, nonreactive awareness to immediate experience" (Brown, 2006, p. 136) are provided, and the relationship between the three components of the definition (present moment, non-judgmentally, and intentional deployment of attention) and suffering is explained and continually referenced and supported.

Present moment attention is presented as related to the suffering associated with being in the past or future and wanting what is not present or not wanting what is present and losing touch with direct real experience for subjective mental interpretation. Present
moment experience is supported through mindfulness of breathing sensations meditations.

A non-judgmental or accepting attitude is related to suffering caused by criticalness, subjective mental interpretation, avoidance, and lack of curiosity, and is cultivated through loving-kindness meditations and reflections on the causes of suffering. Non-judgment will also be related to mindfulness as a wholesome, open, curious and non-defensive mode of being.

The intentional deployment of attention is explained as mitigating suffering due to lack of self-control, mindlessness, and automatic behaviors. Clients learn focus explicitly on their intent for beginning meditation group, and the positive nature of these aspirations is encouraged (e.g., be a kinder person). These exercises increase motivation to practice, help increase determination, and increase hope and internal motivation. Compassion is introduced as helpful motivation and clients goals are related to the desire for well-being, self-compassion, and decrease of suffering.

Buddhist teachings on the preciousness of present-moment experience, the law of cause and effect, non-permanence, and compassion are initially presented as supports for mindfulness meditation and these teachings help increase motivation to practice, tolerance of present internal experience, and orientation to present-moment experience. This approach is consistent with research on the importance of internal motivation (Brown & Kasser, 2005) as well as support for the importance of hope in change (Snyder et al., 2003). A handout for group members to read before meditation is included in Appendix A.
Following the first session, a self-report measure (Appendix C) will be filled out by participants to assess their understanding of mindfulness, their hope for its helpfulness, and their intent to practice. Additionally, the multifaceted FFMQ may help detect attitudinal shifts from this intervention.

**Loving-Kindness**

Buddhist conceptualizations of mindfulness and well-being are explicit about the need for compassion (Thrangu, 2002; Wallace, 1999) and the desire for kindness and compassion is a core motivation for meditation. In this intervention, in congruence with a wholesome definition of mindfulness, the model of suffering includes the detrimental, self-injurious, and suffering-creating nature of experiencing afflicting emotions. Thus, it is hypothesized that the inclusion of loving-kindness and self-compassion meditations will increase positive affective emotional experiences, increase motivation to practice meditation and support a positive intent, help support a mindfully accepting attitude, and teach a compassion-based model of suffering. Self-compassion and loving kindness is explained as linked to the “non-judgment” aspect of the mindfulness definition of mindfulness and an initial compassion exercise will use the “benefactor meditation” (Appendix B), which utilizes a visualization of receiving support from an individually determined benefactor who supports the intent to gain from meditation and who wishes them well-being and peacefulness. Although the benefactor is typically the recipient of loving-kindness, Neff (2003b) and Gilbert and Irons (2004) have emphasized beginning with self-compassion; thus, the initial emphasis is on receiving the support and kindness, which will be termed “friendliness” (Wallace, 1999, p. 87). In the second session, the desire for one’s well-being is cultivated, related to the intent to meditation, and wishes for
well-being will be offered to others. These interventions will experientially increase the affective support for and reinforcement of the intent to meditate (included in Appendix A), positive affective experience of hope, and a first introduction to the notion of emotional interdependence and compassion. Meditations will be based on the meditations of Salzberg (1995), and a sample meditation is provided in Appendix D. This meditation is consistent with interventions that have received empirical support for increasing positive affect and satisfaction with life (Fredrickson et al., 2008; Hutchereson et al., 2008). Furthermore, there is recent evidence that self-compassion accounts for decreased relapse rates in MBCT interventions (Kuyken et al., 2010).

This intervention will help increase access to positive emotional states, an important factor in self-efficacy and increasing positive motivation (Fredrickson, 1998). It will also increase self-compassion (Neff, 2003b), and will incorporate a wholesome, ethically positive, Buddhist congruent definition of mindfulness. Furthermore, this intervention will increase the benefit of mindfulness meditation on emotion regulation (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006) by providing clients with techniques and a cognitive model for working with negative emotions. The effectiveness of this section can be assessed by the FFMQ, self-compassion scale, and perhaps other measures of positive affective states.

**Ethical Behavior**

This section involves clients identifying behaviors that contribute to and detract from mindfulness and kindness and their individual intent for the group, and increase and decrease them respectively. Behaviors are first identified, restraint is advocated, and then virtue-based, well-being enhancing alternatives are developed, congruent with the Buddhist model for moral progression (Bhodi, 1998; Brown, 2006). This approach is
consistent with the approach of Avants and Margolin (2004), who utilized personal reflections on automatic behaviors that contribute to suffering and adding a character strength approach (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) for emphasizing mindful and compassionate behaviors. Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) and Brown and Kasser (2005) also advocated for incorporation of personally relevant, internally meaningful values and character strengths. As such, this intervention is a departure from the Buddhist emphasis on universal ethical behavior and specific precepts, such as Hanh’s (1993) rendering of the *pancasila* and Monteiro et al.’s (2010) Buddhist based ethical intervention, focusing instead on client-determined behaviors that increase and decrease mindfulness (see Appendix E). The emphasis on mindful and ethically informed behavior is supported by discussions of cause and effect and the relationship with kindness for oneself and others, emphasizing the harmful and beneficial nature of personally selected behaviors. This utility of this section will be assessed via participant compliance and ability to increase mindfulness supporting behaviors and decrease mindfulness decreasing behaviors, and assessed via changes on the Valued Living Questionnaire (VLQ; Wilson, Sandoz, & Kitchens, 2008).

The overall effectiveness of this intervention can be determined by comparing practice rates, attrition, outcomes on mindfulness, and other well-being and pathology measures to a standard mindfulness interventions such as MBCT or MBSR.

The evidence presented above suggests that the incorporation of additional Buddhist practices, practices which have been used for thousands of years to cultivate mindfulness, may help increase the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions. Reflections designed to increase intent to practice, meditations on self-compassion and
kindness, and the prescription of behavioral manifestations of mindfulness have all been shown to be beneficial and likely will increase the already positive support for mindfulness. Thus, this project has attempted to integrate centuries of Buddhist meditation theory, instruction, and practice into already established mindfulness interventions.
References


symptoms of schizophrenia. *Journal of Clinical Psychology: In session, 65, 499-509.*


Appendix A

Cultivating Mindfulness

These reflections will help prepare your mind and heart for the arising of mindfulness:

1. **Preciousness**: To be able to take a few minutes from your day to quietly cultivate mindfulness is a precious opportunity. Many people in the world are not so fortunate. There have been times in our lives when we’ve not had the opportunity. To sit in calm reflection for a few minutes; what a great gift!

2. **Cause and Effect**: Every second you practice mindfulness, you create a more fertile ground for well being and happiness in the future. Can you reflect non-judgmentally and with acceptance to the thoughts, feelings, and sensations that are going on right now?

3. **Non-permanence**: The internal world moves quickly and is constantly changing from moment to moment. Each thought/feeling/sensation comes into awareness, stays for a time, and then fades away. Remember, when pain or hardship comes up in your meditation, you can tell yourself “this too will pass.”

4. **Gratitude and Compassion**: This opportunity to develop mindfulness is supported by those who have helped us in the past by their kindness. Spend a moment thinking about someone who has been kind to you and thank them. Think about being that person for someone else. Use this positive feeling of caring and kindness to wish for peace and happiness for yourself and others.

5. **Remember**: Mindfulness is:
   
   “Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally”
   
   --- Jon Kabat-Zinn

   “Mindfulness is the application of pure, non-reactive awareness to immediate experience”
   
   --- Dan Brown
Appendix B

Mindfulness Motivation Measure

Please take a moment to reflect on today’s meeting and how any information you received and any experiences you’ve had changed your feelings or thoughts about meditation. Then fill out the questions below as honestly as possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I now have a good idea of what mindfulness is.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I am more motivated to meditate than I was before today’s meeting.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I am eager to develop mindfulness.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I have a good idea of how being mindful will help me.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I believe I can develop mindfulness.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>6. This group is a good use of my time.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>7. I believe the group leaders can help me develop mindfulness.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>8. The meditation instructions today were clear and easy to follow.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>9. I am excited about this group.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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Overall, what did you think of the instructions and session today?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Is there anything you wish were different about today’s meeting?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Appendix C

Activities to Support Mindfulness

Mindfulness is an experience of being attentive to present moment of experience, directly knowing what it, with an attitude of openness, curiosity, and gentleness, free from judgment, tension, fear, anger. Certain activities or behaviors help us develop mindfulness and other activities or behaviors make it less likely that we will be mindful. For example, acts of kindness, gratitude, and friendliness towards oneself and others support mindfulness. Acts or thoughts of aggression, meanness, or behaviors that make control over our mind difficult (like getting lost in our feelings or drinking alcohol) make mindfulness less likely. Pay attention to and jot down activities from your week that support mindfulness and ones that decrease the likelihood of mindfulness.

Activities/ Behaviors That Support Mindfulness:

Tip: Consider thoughts or acts that demonstrate determination, wisdom, compassion, kindness, generosity, respect, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Feelings involved</th>
<th>What was your intent?</th>
<th>Relationship to your intent in this group</th>
<th>How it relates to happiness</th>
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</table>
Activities/ Behaviors That Hinder Mindfulness

Tip: Consider thoughts or acts that relate to anger, greed, selfishness, apathy, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Feelings involved</th>
<th>What was your intent?</th>
<th>Relationship to your intent in this group</th>
<th>How it relates to suffering</th>
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Appendix D

Benefactor and Loving Kindness Meditations
Adapted from Salzberg (1995, p.57)

Friendliness Phrases: Phrases that Support Happiness and Well-being

May I be happy
May I be free from danger
May I have the ease of well-being
May I be calm
May I be mindful
Create own, with a positive intent

Benefactor Meditation:
For this meditation you will need to bring to mind someone who you respect and have almost entirely positive feelings for, who has qualities of kindness, warmth and respect.

Spend a few minutes calling to mind the positivity of your intent to learn meditation or the rightness of your wish to be happy. Gently say the friendliness phrases to yourself, emphasizing your heartfelt desire to be happy, in a positive, hopeful, courageous way (instructor speak phrases).

“We say the phrases as though cherishing a fragile, precious object in our hand. Were we to grab on to it too tightly, it would shatter and break. Were we to be lax and negligent, it would fall out of our hand and break. We cherish the object gently, carefully, without force but paying close attention. Try to connect to each phrase, one at a time, there is no need to worry about what has gone by or to anticipate what has not yet come, not even the next phrase. Don’t struggle to manufacture a feeling of love. Simply repeat the phrases, thereby planning the potent seeds of intention, and trust that nature will take its own course” (Salzberg, 1995, p. 58)

Now bring to mind someone who you respect, who is kind, and whom you have nearly unconditional positive feelings for. It is best if this is not someone who you have sexual or a desire for a different relationship with, but someone who you are very content with the relationship as it is or was. Clearly call this person to mind, maybe visualizing them, saying their name. Bring to mind ways they have helped you, contributed to the world, the ways they embody goodness. If positive feelings are present, allow them to energize you. If no feelings are there, don’t seek them, focus on their goodness and their wish to be happy. Now visualize them wishing for your happiness, speaking the friendliness phrases to you, wishing for your to fulfill your intent (instructor speak phrases). Imagine them smiling at you, supporting your intent and motivation, your desire for happiness and well-being. If you lose your train of thought, that’s ok, bring your mind back to the benefactor, their goodness, their support for you, and your intent and wish to be happy.
Instructor transition into a short mindfulness of the breath.

**Loving-Kindness Meditation:**

For this meditation you will need to bring to mind two people: someone who you fully respect, someone you don’t know very well, that you have no strong feelings for one way or another, an acquaintance, co-worker, clerk at a store etc.

Spend a few minutes calling to mind the positivity of your intent to learn meditation or the rightness of your wish to be happy. Gently say the friendliness phrases to yourself, emphasizing your heartfelt desire to be happy, in a positive, hopeful, courageous way (instructor speak phrases).

Now bring to mind someone who you respect, who is kind, and whom you have nearly unconditional positive feelings for. Extend the feelings of friendliness to them, expressing the wish for their well-being by saying the phrases to them. (Instructor speak phrases). If your mind wanders, bring your focus back on to the goodness and respect you have for this person and your wish for them to be happy. Connect your intent for this meditation to increase your ability to be kinder and friendlier to yourself and others.

Now bring to mind someone who you don’t know well, that you recognize, but have no strong feelings for. Can be an acquaintance or associate. Visualize this person as also wanting happiness and well-being and express to them your wish for their well-being and happiness. Connect your intent for this meditation to increase your ability to be kinder and friendlier to yourself and others.

Instructor transition into a short mindfulness of the breath
Appendix E

Outline for two Session Mindfulness Add On:

Session 1:
Introductions and Orientation to Group
Clarification of intent for joining group (positive focus, not just negative)
Introduction of mindfulness, in relation to suffering,
Introduction of first two (precocious opportunity and cause and effect; hope and
determination) supports for mindfulness (Appendix A)
Emphasis on cause and effect- acceptance of present moment experience
Posture, meditation on breath, starting with intent for group and first two supports
Debrief
More on mindfulness, three aspect definition, each component relation to suffering, and
end with importance of kindness and compassion
Meditation with intent, benefactor, mm of breathing
Homework- intent, first two supports, and mindfulness of breath

Session 2
Start with meditation- start with intent, first two supports, benefactor
Check in
Review of mindfulness definition- focus on three aspects and kindness towards self
Second two supports for mindfulness –impermanence (present-moment) and compassion
(non-judgment, acceptance)
Throwing coals metaphor- this is interdependence
LKM meditation, focus on self and intent for group
Mindfulness as cultivated- increasing behaviors that support it and decreasing those that
make it less likely.
Homework- increasing and decreasing activities related to mm and intent, four supports
mindfulness of breath