

Finding Your Wise Mind

I am sure by now, you are beginning to realize that mindfulness is a really important aspect of this program, which is primarily down to my professional studies and personal experience with building, and living, the Life I want to live. In fact, it is definitely the case with Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), that mindfulness is the fundamental practice that underpins everything else in the skills training process. We are not able to access the “toolbox” that’s available through DBT training without the ability to practice things mindfully, because this is how we become self aware.

Self awareness is something that many people think they have, but as I found out myself when I was personally put to the test, most people, like me, are sadly lacking in this area. I have come to know my own Self awareness as a sense of inner wisdom, to know what I am thinking, what I am feeling, what my body is experiencing, and what beliefs I may be creating about what’s happening around me, without the judgement associated with the stories I have formed over time about these external, and internal things.

It is a primary assumption of DBT, that each person has this innate inner wisdom at their core, this wisdom is known in the skills training program as Wise Mind. If you are used to working with different styles of therapy that also adopt a mindful approach, you will find many similarities with their way of looking at this internal sense of wisdom. For example, with Internal Family Systems, Wise Mind is similar to their use of Self with a capital S. In Schema Therapy, it is equivalent to their “Healthy Adult” mode, and in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, there are a lot of comparisons that can be drawn between a state of Wise Mind and their Observing Self.

When we develop our ability to access this inner wisdom, we can say that we are in a state of Wise Mind. This inner wisdom is a space that we have to get to, so that we can acknowledge, accept, and integrate the polar opposites that exist within our personality system. These polarizations are known in DBT as the experience of being stuck in a state of reason mind, or a state of emotion mind. For me, this involves us acknowledging that these states are simply a representation of the many different parts of your personality that have been activated by the situation you are in. Some of these parts are emotional by nature, and some of them are reasonable. When activated, they are simply doing what they think they have to do to survive, or just cope with their current experience of “reality.”

When you are in a wise mind state, you are open to experiencing your reality exactly as it is, accepting that there are parts of you that have been triggered and not making these parts of you wrong for the way they see the world. In the Wise Mind state, you are not reacting to the parts of you that are communicating from emotion mind, or buying in to what the parts of you that are coming from a state of reason mind are trying to get you to buy into. You are able to be in the moment, noticing what’s happening around you, accepting what’s happening within you, and educating your parts on what is so in “actuality” rather than what they are creating in their own personal version of reality.

Accepting the thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations associated with these parts gives us the ability to use the skills available to us in any basic DBT skills training program, and allows us

to apply our knowledge, experience, and a general common sense to the situation at hand. For some people, accessing and applying their own inner wisdom is easy. For others, it is very hard, but everyone has the capacity for wisdom. Everyone has a wise mind experience within, even if you cannot access it at this particular point in time it is important that you accept the concept that this is a possibility. Wise Mind is a state of being that is often deep within us, so accessing it can take time and practice. We have to develop our ability to walk ourselves into a space of relaxation that allows us to simply be in the moment, a level of internal awareness that only comes where the fear of what is happening in the external world is no longer present. So, how do we access this wise mind state, what's the process we go through to get into this elevated state of being?

Sometimes it happens naturally, without your knowledge of even being there. This is often referred to as "Being in the Zone" which is something that many people who participate in sports or musical activities report an intricate experience of from time to time. We have to know what it feels like in order to recognize when we are there, and the only way I know of walking myself into a space of Wise Mind is through guided meditation. Following a guided meditation practice helps develop your ability to get into this space. If you are following the online classes that are associated with this module, work through the recordings of the guided meditations that are listed below. If not, read through the transcript and put them into practice through meditation, check out the meditations available on our YouTube channel, listed in the introduction, or develop your own process with the use of any online resources you can find.

Stone Flake on a Lak

Sit in a comfortable but attentive position, and if possible, close your eyes. If not just find a place to rest your gaze that will not distract your attention in any way.

As you sit there, focus your mind on your breath. Attend to your breath coming in, and your breath going out, and as you breathe naturally in and out, imagine you are by a lake on a warm sunny day. It is a large, clear, very blue lake.

The sun is shining warmly on the lake. Imagine that you are a small stone flake from a piece of stone near the lake, and imagine being gently tossed out onto the lake, out to the middle of the lake, skimming onto the cool, clear, blue waters of the lake.

Imagine that you are slowly, very slowly floating down in the lake, noticing all that is in the lake as you gently float down, floating down in the cool, clear blue waters, gazing at what is around you, and now settling on the clear bottom of the lake.

Continue to sit at the center of the lake, gazing at the clear waters and what is nearby. And when you are ready, open your eyes, come back to the room, trying to maintain your awareness of that clear center that is within you.

Walking Down the Inner Spiral Staircase

Sit in a comfortable but attentive position, and if possible, close your eyes. If not just find a place to rest your gaze that will not distract your attention in any way.

As you sit there, focus your mind on your breath. Attend to your breath coming in, and your breath going out, and as you breathe naturally in and out, imagine there is an inner spiral staircase within you.

Imagine that you are walking down the staircase, going at your own pace, making the staircase as light or as dark as you wish, with as many windows as you wish.

Walking slowly down, and as you walk, noticing if you are tired or afraid, sitting down on the steps if you wish, walking down the stairs, as steep or as shallow as you wish, light or dark.

Noticing as you walk down moving toward your very center, toward your own wise mind, toward wisdom, simply walking down at your own pace, stopping, and sitting when you arrive at a still point.

And when you are ready, open your eyes, come back to the room, trying to maintain your awareness of that clear center that is within you.

Asking “Is This Wise Mind?”

Sit in a comfortable but attentive position, and if possible, close your eyes. If not just find a place to rest your gaze that will not distract your attention in any way.

As you sit there, focus your mind on your breath. Attend to your breath coming in, and your breath going out, and as you breathe naturally in and out, bring to mind something you want to do or something you don't want to do, an opinion you have, or something you are doing right now.

Focus your mind on your breath, notice your breath coming in and your breath going out as you breathe naturally, in and out. As you inhale, ask yourself, “Is this (action) wise mind?”

For Example – “Is eating a second dessert wise mind?” “Is not going to my therapy session wise mind?”

As you exhale, listen (don’t talk, don’t answer) for the answer.

Keep asking with each breath in and listening with each breath out.

See if an answer comes to you. If not, perhaps there is no answer now, or perhaps you are too ambivalent to know the answer.

There are many other examples of Wise Mind meditations available online. Use these guided meditations, along with the constantly updated meditations available on the social media platforms of The Liberation Place, in whatever form you find preferable, every day. Practice developing your ability to walk yourself into this internal space of peace. If this is a skill you can master, it will only serve to benefit you on your journey of behaviour change. Particularly as we step into understanding the different parts of your personality, and educating them on the way things actually are, rather than the way your stories about the past have influenced the present moment, causing your parts to only see the world from this tainted and filtered perspective.

In order to practice mindfulness skills, we have to put them into a structured daily schedule, as all of the research associated with DBT shows, if we don’t do this, it is highly unlikely that we will follow through with actually participating in the practice. Take the time to develop a morning, and night routine, in which you incorporate your mindfulness practice. Use the skills of mindful breathing, creating your safe place, and accessing wise mind to begin, and end your day. This will set you up for success, because remember, you will always achieve what your lifestyle has you set up to achieve. If time is hard to come by, participating in some of your more mundane daily activities “One Mindfully” can be a way to overcome this issue.