The Craving Mind

Stanley Merrill
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Houston Jung Center

Micro Practice

- Long Slow Breath
- Focus on the place where do you feel the breath most vividly.
- If possible get a felt sense of the breath.
- Be aware of what you are aware of.
Agenda

Intellectual understanding
- How we get addicted.
- How we can stop.
  - Traditional approaches.
  - Mindfulness approaches.

Experiential – Practical
- Guided meditations in this class
- After class optional – “Craving Challenge”
- Micro Practices – short – done throughout the day

Disclaimer

Habits vs Addictions

- Addiction is continued use, despite adverse consequences.
- If you have a serious addiction problem seek professional help.
- This class can server to complement a more formal program.
Practical!
Special Focus on Meditation

- Why people can’t meditate – “I meditated before and I loved it but I stopped doing it.”
  - It takes too much time
  - My mind was always wondering and I am no good at it.
- If the solution to addiction is found in meditation we need to make a meditation practice accessible.
  - Easier to do
  - Small doses
  - Less time

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Solution

- Best way to eat an elephant
  - One bite at a time
- Micro Practices throughout the day
  - Many 1 and 2 minute meditations that break up the day.
- Training Wheels
  - Skillful means – techniques that help you stay focused.
- Reasonable time commitment

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Training Wheels
Skillful Means

- Excellent for beginners
- Learn to walk before you run
- Skillful means – techniques for slowing down the thinking mind.
  - Keep your mind busy doing other things.
- “Training wheel” – Skillful means techniques to stay present
  - Long slow breaths to decrease your heart rate, blood pressure and create a sense of relaxation.
  - Counting as you breathe in and out.
  - Getting your full attention on bodily sensations.
    - Be interested and curious
  - Can be done even when highly agitated.
  - Can be helpful in helping you sleep

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Without training wheels

- When you are good at the “training wheels” meditation stop using them.
- No artificial control of present moment experiences
  - No counting.
  - No controlled breathing.
  - No aspirational thoughts or imagery.
- Without training wheels
  - You are practicing MINDFULNESS.
  - Intentionally becoming aware of present moment experiences.
  - Not fighting those experiences (non-judgmental and accepting)
  - Aware of what you are aware of (kindly pulling back to the present moment without judging yourself)
  - A sense of well-being in spite of present moment circumstances.

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Tip

- Do training wheels first for any meditation.
- See if you can do the meditation without the training wheels.
- If you are too agitated go back to the training wheels.

Training Wheels
Guided Meditation

- 1. Long slow breath
- 2. Counting and long slow breath
  - Count on the in-breath
  - Count on the out-breath
- 3. Counting and felt sense and long slow breath
  - Continue counting
  - Focus on nostrils as you breathe in
  - Focus on you lips as you breathe out.
- 4. Felt sense and long slow breath
  - Stop counting
- 5. Just Felt sense – Training wheels are gone!
  - Stop long slow breath
What were your experiences during this exercise?

Intellectual Understanding
The Addiction Problem

Operant Conditioning
Negative conditioning

- Behavior: Eat Chocolate
- Reward: Feel Happy
- Trigger: Boredom

Positive conditioning

- Behavior: Eat Chocolate
- Reward: Feel Happy
- Trigger: Good News! I deserve some chocolate.
Then I asked whether there ever had been times when he couldn’t smoke—on an airplane or a bus, for example.

Yes, he replied.

“What happened then?” I asked.

He pondered for a few moments and said something to the effect of, “I guess it went away.”

“Let me make sure I understand,” I said. “If you don’t smoke, your cravings go away on their own?”

I was leading the witness, but to be fair, I did want to make sure I understood him. We had to be on the same page in order to proceed.

He nodded. ... Judson Brewer
“For the vast majority of my patients, the reward came from making something unpleasant go away (negative reinforcement). Rarely did one of them say that it felt great to go on a three-day cocaine binge, blow hundreds of dollars or more a day, and sleep it off for the next few days. They described their reward-based learning as a way to avoid situations, numb their pain, mask unpleasant emotions, and, most often, succumb to their cravings. Scratching that damn itch.” —Judson Brewer

“When we scratch the wound and give into our addictions, we do not allow the wound to heal. But when we instead experience the raw quality of the itch or pain of the wound and do not scratch it, we actually allow the wound to heal. So not giving in to our addictions is about healing at a very basic level.” —Pema Chödrön

RAIN
Became aware of my triggers for:

- Checking email
- Eating chocolate
- Rumination
- Thinking mind
  - Example: Difficult person
  - The Trigger – feel like a victim
  - The Behavior: Giving them a piece of my mind in my mind
  - The Reward: ????
- **Becoming aware** gave me a choice
  - I was able to stop the conditioned BEHAVIOR and the urge went away.

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Questions?

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Content?

- Student: “I am having a relationship problem. Will you help me?”
- Teacher: “Yes, but don’t tell me about the content. Tell me where you feel it in your body.”

Why feel it in your body?

- What we want
  - Empathy
  - The problem to go away
- What do we need
  - A sense of well-being which leads to
  - The ability to be think clearly which helps us
  - Gain the insight we need
    - To solve the problem
    - Or just to cope with it.
Jon Kabat-Zinn  
MBSR Teacher Training

- Student: “I have a hearing problem and feel so frustrated in this class. I feel like and invalid” (The student was in tears).
- Jon Kabat-Zinn: “When you feel that way, how do you experience that frustration in your body?”

What is content?

- Being upset that reality isn’t the way we want it to be.
- Buddhism – Suffering - DUKHA
  - Having what we don’t want.
  - Not having what we want.
  - Disappointment that things change.
Sometimes the content is about things

- We cannot change.
- We have to choose between equally unpleasant outcomes.
  - “Damned if you do. Damned if you don’t”
  - When this happens the decision should be based on our values and not someone else’s.
  - We need to become our own authority figure.
  - Self-compassion - Grace – Love ourselves in spite of our human fragility.

**Often reactivity makes it worse.**

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Getting Grounded

- Letting go of the thoughts in your head.
- Being able to get in touch with the felt sense of your body.
- Grounded - really experience the sensations.
- The more “grounded” you are the more sensitive you will be to sensations.
- Often leads to a
  - Relaxation
  - Equanimity
  - SENSE OF WELL-BEING!
- Liberation from psychological and physiological pain.

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Buddhism in a nutshell

- "You can’t change the wind but you can adjust the sails"

Meditation is the **TECHNIQUE**

**SENSE OF WELL-BEING** is the **BENEFIT**

- We can develop the capacity to have a **SENSE OF WELL-BEING IN SPITE OF** the inevitable vicissitudes in life.
- When we have a **SENSE OF WELL-BEING** we can handle problems much more effectively.
- We aren’t free from the problems, we are free from the physiological and psychological suffering they bring.
Reframing

Start with “small problem”

- What can I learn from this situation?
- How can I grow from this situation?
- In what way is this an opportunity?

This approach engages the thinking mind.

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Our responsibility!

- HAVE A
  - SENSE OF WELL-BEING
  - IN SPITE OF CIRCUMSTANCES!
- MEDITATION / MINDFULNESS
  - Are the tools we need to cultivate that ability.

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Questions?

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Meditation

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RAIN
Most effective part of the program

“The winner: RAIN. While formal meditation practices were positively correlated with outcomes, the informal practice of RAIN was the only one that passed statistical muster—showing a direct relationship to breaking the craving-smoking link. This story was coming together nicely” ... Judson Brewer

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Rain
Getting Grounded

- First Step - Recognize
  - Realize there is emotion and content.
- Second Step - Allow
  - Don’t reject the content.
  - Accept your emotions and thoughts. You are human.
  - Anger is always honest
  - Anxiety can be a helpful trigger
  - We are human and need self-compassion in spite of our frailties.
  - "I can handle that"
- Third Step - Investigate
  - Get out of your “content” – thinking mind.
  - Get into the felt sense of your body.
- Fourth Step – Nurture – Non-Identify
  - When you Don’t identify with your emotions
  - Nurture yourself.

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Think about your favorite snack food.
Picture it
Remember how it feels to eat it
Think about the texture.
Think about the smell
Remember how good you feel when you eat it.
Smile
How do you feel
Think about how enjoyable it is to have that special food.
R in Rain is for recognize
Recognize that feeling of craving for that food.
Rain
Guided Meditation

- Feel the craving and notice the craving.
- A in Rain is for Allowing.
- Allow the feeling
- It is normal to have craving. It is OK.
- It is normal to have anxiety, fear and anger. It is OK.
- Treat that feeling of craving like it is a guest.
- Treat all thoughts, emotions, sounds and sensations as honored guests
- Be kind to them.
- Allow them.
- I in Rain is for Investigate it.
- Investigate your immediate physical sensations
- Where in your body do you feel it most vividly?

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Rain
Guided Meditation

- If you don't notice anything that is OK.
- Get in touch with your body.
- Be really curious about the details of the sensation
- Do you feel a tingling on the skin on your face.
- Can you feel the air touching your face.
- Go through the body with great curiosity and interest.
- Any tingling in any part of your body?
- If you notice a particularly strong sensation, notice if it changes.
- Notice is the craving still there?
- Is it stronger or weaker?
- Where do you experience craving?

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Rain Guided Meditation

- Are there thoughts arising?
- Bring your attention back to your felt sense of the body.
- The N in Rain is for non-identified.
- If you are in your body, if you are grounded you may stop identifying with the craving.
- If you are in your body, sometimes you have a nurturing feeling a sense of well-being.
- The more connected you are to your bodily sensations the tranquil you will become.

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The solution

- Traditional Approach for addiction
  - Find a substitute behavior: Eat carrots, methanol
    - Unfortunately you have a different habit.
  - Avoid the trigger
    - What if the trigger is your boss?
- Judson Brewer
  - Determine what triggers the behavior.
  - When you notice the trigger situation focus on the felt sense of this craving until it dissipates. (The I in investigate)
  - If you can do this once you have learned how to stop the behavior in the future

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Using our wisdom mind
Insight Meditation

- Becoming aware of what you are aware of.
- Noticing your thoughts, emotions and behaviors with a kind attention.
- “You can observe a lot by watching.” ... Yogi Berra.
- Insight Meditation – There is an inner wisdom, an wise person in us that can help us if we notice what we are doing!

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Operant conditioning
Insight

- Notice the trigger.
  - What do we do when we notice the trigger.
- Understand the consequences.
- Change the behavior.

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Meditation Tips

- Pay attention in the present moment.
- Be interested - Be curious.
- Be courageous.
- Joy – it can be fascinating
- Notice and savor the tranquility
- Concentration - Felt sense of bodily sensation.
- Sense of well being - equanimity

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Seven factors of awakening.
They are as follows:

- Mindfulness (Pali: sati),
- Interest/investigation (dhamma vicaya),
- Courageous energy (viriya),
- Joy/rapture (piti),
- Tranquility/relaxation (passaddhi),
- Concentration (samadhi), and
- Equanimity (upekkha).

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Grounding
Everyone is doing it.

- Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction – Jon Kabat-Zinn
- Cheri Huber – Stop – Drop – Get centered

Google’s Meditation Program
“Search Inside Your Self”
SBNRR

- Stop – let go of the story get into the moment
- Breathe
- Notice – what is in your body
- Reflect – what is the right response.
- Respond – find the most compassionate response
Why meditation helps

- Cultivates the objective observer to help us see things more clearly
  - Mindfulness is constantly being aware of what we are doing.
  - Insights
- Mental discipline
- Awareness
  - Increases the chance we will be aware of the trigger early in the cycle
- Getting embodied decreases the power of the trigger
  - Boredom
  - Anger

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Personal experience

- Made me aware of
  - Habits
  - Triggers
  - Rationalizations

- Over time
  - Anticipate
  - Substitute constructive behaviors
  - Gain more and more control

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Examples

- Boredom
  - Eating chocolates
  - Checking Email
- I am a victim
  - Rumination
  - What is the reward?
- Life’s not fair
  - What is the reward?

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Micro Practice 2 minutes

- Can be done throughout the day
- Approach of “Integrate and Embody”
- Training wheels. You choose:
  - Just breathing long slow and deep.
  - Breathing long slow and deep and counting.
  - Breathing long slow and deep and counting and noticing your bodily sensations.

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Questions?

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Meditation vs Mindfulness

Meditation
Formal Practice

Mindfulness
Informal Practice

A regular meditation practice develops the mental discipline
That is required to be mindful during the day

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Meditation and Mindfulness

- Jon Kabat-Zinn
  - Paying attention
  - On Purpose
  - Present Moment Awareness
  - Non judgmental
- Anam Thubten
  - Being aware of what you are aware of
- Chris Germer
  - Awareness of the present moment with acceptance

Mindfulness Practices

- Eating
- Walking
- Noting
- Showering
- Washing Dishes
- Anything!!!
Mindfulness Eating Practice

- In silence.
- One bite at a time and notice
  - What are you aware of?
  - The taste of the food?
  - The actions of your tongue and teeth?
  - If any thought arises?
- Put down spoon between bites.

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Noting practice

- Skillful means of maintaining mindfulness.
- Narrative to yourself of what you are doing. Example:
  - I am walking to my car.
  - I feel my right foot touching the pavement.
  - I notice that my left foot is lifting.
  - Etc.
- Skillful means because it uses the thinking mind to stop ruminating.
- Mindfulness is being so aware and conscious that we don’t need to be reminded by our thinking mind.

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Noting

- “I taught him to simply note to himself (silently or aloud) each body sensation that came on with a craving.

- We used the analogy of surfing: my patient’s cravings were like waves, and he could use this “noting practice” as a surfboard to help him get on the wave and ride it until it was gone. He could ride the wave as if it were the inverted U on the board, feeling it build, crest, and fall.

- I explained how each time he rode the wave, he stopped reinforcing the habit of smoking. He now had a concrete tool—his own surfboard—that he could use each time he craved a smoke.” ...Judson Brewer

“This awareness is what mindfulness is all about:

- seeing clearly what happens when we get caught up in our behaviors and then becoming viscerally disenchantedly.

- Over time, as we learn to see more and more clearly the results of our actions, we let go of old habits and form new ones. The paradox here is that mindfulness is just about being interested in, and getting close and personal with, what is happening in our bodies and minds.

- It is really this willingness to turn toward our experience rather than to try to make our unpleasant cravings go away as quickly as possible.” ...Judson Brewer
Micro practice

- **Body Scan**
  - Notice the sensations in your body.
  - Start from the top of your head to the bottom of your feet.
  - Be detailed – right thumb, right index finger etc.

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Ego driven addictions

- Facebook
  - Checking for likes
  - Watching our friends feeds.
- “Branding” ourselves.
  - Defining a persona that we want to project.
- Taking selfies at the Louvre
- Daydreaming of fame and glory
- Romantic Love – the story of me.
  - Feeling that we are loved.
  - Hollis referred to it as a neurosis.

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Consequences

- Studies have shown
  - We do Facebook to because we want to be liked and increase our self-esteem.
  - Unfortunately, we can become envious of others we see on Facebook.
  - The Facebook often decreases our self esteem.
- We are constantly being distracted
  - We miss whatever beauty is in the present moment.
  - We are far less productive.
- Child injuries increased after cell phones
  - Only in areas with cell phone coverage.

What drives our behaviors?

- Everyone wants to feel that they are:
  - Being heard
  - Valued
  - Respected
  - Needed
  - Important
  - Special
- Understanding this, there are supportive things that we can do and self-destructive things that we can stop doing.
The irony of life is that the more we honor those around us and the less we need to feed our ego, the more content we will be.

Do a mindful listening Exercise.

- As I go through the next few slides.
- Be aware of what you are aware of
- Notice when thoughts arise.
- Could you remember what is said.
- Do emotions or thoughts arise?
Never Miss an opportunity to encourage or compliment

If you’re really that important, make people feel valued.

Compassion

“Admit something. Everyone you see, you say to them "Love me." Of course you do not do this out loud: Otherwise, Someone would call the cops. Still, though, think about this, this great pull in us to connect.

Why not become the one who lives with a full moon in each eye that is always saying, With that sweet moon Language What every other eye in this world Is dying to Hear?”.. Hafiz
Zengetsu

“To a true Zen student everyday is a fortunate day.
- Time passes by but he never lags behind.
- Neither glory nor shame can move him.”

Our need for glory and
Our fear of shame
Do not serve us well

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Don’t get hooked

The more that we strive for attention and praise
the more it will allude us.

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End Mindful listening

- Where you able to listen?
- Did you mind wander?
- Where you aware of what you were aware of?

Think of someone you respect and admire

- Think of characteristics that would describe them.
Think of someone you respect and admire

- Kind
- Interested in you
- Encouraging
- Supportive
- Proactive
- Not arrogant
- Not self-centered

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Micro Practice 2 minutes

- Can be done throughout the day
- Aspirational Practice
  - Wish someone you love: May you have Peace, Happiness, Contentment and Joy. May you be Honored, Appreciated and Valued.
Self Test

Let’s see for ourselves, with the help of this short quiz. In this case, “X” is your cell phone usage. Put a checkmark in each box that applies to you.

- Using X for longer than you meant to
- Wanting to cut down or stop using X but not managing to
- Spending a lot of time using, or recovering from using, X
- Cravings and urges to use X
- Not managing to do what you should at work, home, or school because of X
- Continuing to use X even when it causes problems in relationships
- Giving up important social, occupational, or recreational activities because of X
Self Test

- Using X again and again, even when it puts you in danger
- Continuing to use X even when you know you have a physical or psychological problem that could have been caused or made worse by it
- Needing more of X to get the effect you want (tolerance)
- Developing withdrawal symptoms that can be relieved by using X more.

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Give yourself a point for each checkmark.

- The total number can help gauge whether your smartphone addiction is
  - Mild (2-3 checkmarks),
  - Moderate (4-5) or
  - Severe 6-7

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No Self

- The Buddhist solution to our suffering:
  - No self
  - No problem

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The stupidest things are often the most profound!

No Self

- I do exist!
- No self is wrong!
- I am separate from you.
- How can this help me?
- Buddhism is crazy!

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No Self
Mundane Understanding

- Mother Nature
  - The seagull
  - The fish
  - Me

Good thing or a Bad thing

- From the birds’ perspective it is good.
- From the fishes’ perspective it is bad.
- From the universal perspective it is just the cycle of life.
Putting things in perspective

- We see ourselves as the center of our universe
- What's in it for me?
- We catastrophize things:
  - I didn't get into the school I wanted
  - I didn't get invited to the senior prom
  - At 16 my romantic attachment left me.
  - My home was flooded.
  - I am old.
- There is a middle way between
  - Egotism – Narcissism – Self-righteousness
  - Selflessness – Indifference
- Is humility a good thing or a bad thing?
  - Is it good enough just to avoid being arrogant?
  - Where do those you admire fit in the humble arrogant scale?

What would our lives be life if

- Take a more universal perspective.
- We didn't take things so seriously.
- We normalized our problems
  - Many people face the same challenges.
- Make the best out of our situation instead of fighting things we can not change.
Buddhism - No Self
What it is really saying.

- The Buddhist texts really only say that there is no inherently existing, permanent self that we can point to. We are:
  - Constantly changing.
  - Highly dependent upon those around us
- If we “reframe” our perspective to see that we are part of something bigger our life has a deeper meaning.
- There are cultures where the collective is more important than the individual

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Four Noble Truths
Similar to Operant Conditioning

- Suffering
  - Want what we don’t have.
  - Have what we don’t want.
  - Impermanence
- **Cause of Suffering**
  - **Craving**
- Cessation of suffering
- Eight fold path
  - Understanding (Craving doesn’t serve us well.)
  - Ethics (Understand the consequences)
  - Meditation (Develop the mental discipline to behave ethically)
In some ways we are just like single cell organisms

- Single cell organisms move toward nutrient and away from toxin.
- Humans move toward pleasure and away from pain.

Mindfulness as a compass.

- When you identify that you there is a trigger:
  - Stress, boredom, anger etc.
- Use that as a wake up call to get grounded.
- Once grounded decide the most constructive thing to do next.
Dependent Origination

1. Because of this there is that
2. We are who we are because of causes and conditions.
   - Difficult people are responding to their pain in self-destructive ways
   - Shanti Deva – The stick

Questions?

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After class.
What’s next

- Website: Being Mindful.com
  - Meditation Groups
  - PowerPoint Handouts
    - Resources -> Handouts -> Craving Mind
  - OPTIONAL – Craving Challenge
    - Resources -> Handouts -> Craving Mind
    - 5 - 15 minutes or less per day
    - Would like feedback
  - Sign up for the newsletter
    - Top Menu item - Newsletter
Craving Challenge
Integrate and Embody

Optional
My experience with Googles Meditation Class
Download a PDF file

Morning
- Short Formal meditation - Simple "training wheels" beginner meditations.
- Read the review material for the day.
Throughout the day
- Is the topic of the day relevant for you
- Do Micro Practices

Night
- Think about the topic and your experiences during the day
- Gratitude practice
- 3 minutes long slow breath

The Mindful Corporation
July 11th - Non Sectarian
Houston Jung Center

- Targeted for corporations and can be taught at the corporation
- Jung Center class is a sampler for Human Resources
- Skills
  - Pro active – Letting Go
  - People Skills – Teamwork - Compassion
  - Mental Discipline – Focus and concentration
- Integrate and Embody Program
  - 28 days - From 5 minutes to 20 minutes – Your choice.
- Sign up for BeingMindful.com newsletter if you haven’t and you will get an email when it is available.
Larry Yang

“All craving is craving for no craving.”

Appendix
Self Referencing

- DMN – Default Mode Network
  - The narrative network
  - The story of me - selfing
  - When are mind wanders

- When we are meditating the DMN quiets down.
  - Can be seen in

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What if, instead of trying to shake it or beat it, we joined it? In other words, what if we used our feeling of stress or dis-ease as our compass?

- The goal is not to find more stress (we all have plenty of that!), but to use our existing stress as a navigation tool.
- What does stress actually feel like, and how does it differ from other emotions such as excitement?
- If we can clearly orient ourselves to the needle of “south” (toward stress) and “north” (away from stress), we can use that alignment as a compass to help guide our lives.
- ... Judson Brewer
Dependent Origination

- Similar to operant conditioning.
- Because of this that happens.
- Insight meditation is becoming more aware of what chain of events trigger our behavior.
- Once behavior is conscious we have a better chance of evaluating the consequences and choosing wisely.
- “A complex is not necessarily good or bad. It depends on what it causes us to do or stops us from doing.” James Hollis

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Dependent Origination

- Everyone is who they are in a large part because of causes and conditions.
  - Your genetics
  - Family of origin
  - Environment
- Shanti Deva
  - Man hits you with a stick.
  - Who do you get angry at.

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P. 37: Dependent origination describes twelve links of a cause-and-effect loop. Something that happens depends upon something else causing it to happen—literally, “This is, because that is.

When we encounter a sensory experience, our mind interprets it based on our prior experience (which is classically described as “ignorance”). This interpretation automatically generates a “feeling tone” that is experienced as pleasant or unpleasant. The feeling tone leads to a craving or an urge—for the pleasant to continue or the unpleasant to go away. Thus motivated, we act on the urge, which fuels the birth of what is referred to in Buddhist psychology as a self-identity. Interestingly, the term for fuel (upadana) is classically translated as “attachment”—which is where Western culture often focuses. The outcome of the action is recorded as a memory, which then conditions the next “round of rebirth,” aka samsara, or endless wandering.