

# The FOUR FOUNDATIONS of MINDFULNESS

by Sal Flynn

*"Mindfulness is simply being aware of what is happening right now without wishing it were different; enjoying the pleasant without holding on when it changes (which it will); being with the unpleasant without fearing it will always be this way (which it won't)"*

*(James Baraz)*

The practices of Mindful Meditation & Yoga direct our investigation to four areas that are critical for understanding who we are and developing an enhanced sense of joy in our lives and ultimately freedom from suffering. These are called the four foundations of mindfulness: body, feelings, mind, and the underlying principles of experience. Here is how we can apply them when working with a difficult experience.

## ONE - The Body

Starting with investigation in the body, we mindfully locate where our difficulties are held in the body. Sometimes we find heat, contraction, hardness, pain or vibration. Sometimes we notice throbbing, numbness, a certain shape or color. We can investigate whether we are meeting this area with resistance or with curiosity. We notice what happens as we hold these sensations lightly with mindful awareness. Do they open? Are there other layers? Is there a centre? Do they intensify, move, expand, change, repeat, dissolve, or transform?

## TWO – The Felt Sense

In the second foundation of mindfulness, we can investigate what feelings are part of this difficulty. Is the primary feeling tone pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral? How are we meeting this feeling? And what are the secondary feelings associated with it? Often we discover a constellation of feelings. A man remembering his divorce may feel sadness, anger, jealousy, loss, fear, and loneliness.

With practice each feeling is recognized and accepted. We investigate how each emotion feels, whether it is pleasant or painful, contracted or relaxed, tense or sad. We notice where we feel the feelings in our body and what happens to it as it is held lightly in awareness.

## THREE – The Mind

Next comes the mind. What thoughts and images are associated with this difficulty? What stories, judgments, and beliefs are we holding? When we look more closely, we often discover that some of them are one-sided, fixed points of view, or out-moded, habitual perspectives. With practice we see that they are only stories and gradually they loosen their hold on us. We cling less to them.

## FOUR - Experience

The fourth foundation to investigate is called mindfulness of experience. We can notice if an experience is actually as solid as it appears. Is it unchanging or is it impermanent, moving, shifting, recreating itself? We notice if the difficulty expands or contracts the space in our mind, if it is in our control or if it has its own life. We notice if it is self-constructed. We investigate whether we are clinging to it, resisting it, or simply letting it be. We see whether our relationship to it is a source of suffering or happiness. And finally, we notice how closely we identify with it.

*The practice of Mindful Meditation & Yoga enables us to engage with the energy of CHANGE moment by moment thus creating a brand new relationship with it & making friends with change.*

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