

Jodi Baretz LCSW

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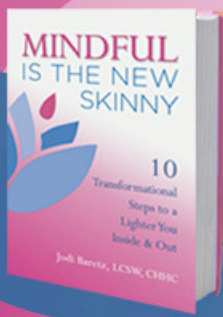


7 Attitudes to Bring to Your Mindfulness Practice

1. Non-judgment- While judgment of situations and others can cause stress, it is important to be non-judgmental toward ourselves. If we judge ourselves and think we are not “good enough,” we most likely will give up. Becoming aware of the judging allows us to take a step back from it.

2. Patience means giving ourselves room to have all of our experiences, “good” and “bad” and not being impatient with ourselves. We become open to where we are at this moment, and do not put pressure on ourselves to be in a different place. Mindfulness is a practice, so having patience with ourselves and not expecting perfection is critical. All things happen in their own time, when we are ready. Think of the caterpillar and the butterfly. When the butterfly is ready, it comes out. If it comes out before it is ready, if someone helps it out of the cocoon, it can’t fly because it didn’t build up the strength.

3. Beginner’s Mind is coming to an experience without pre-conceived notions. Without beginners mind, we are programmed to act in certain ways and see situations in a particular way based on our past. However, if we are willing to think out of the box, and set aside expectations, we may see things differently. If we come to the meditation practice with a beginners mind, we will see each time it is different. We won’t expect the same experience each time, and that will bring new life and energy to it. We will discuss this concept more in depth later in the book.



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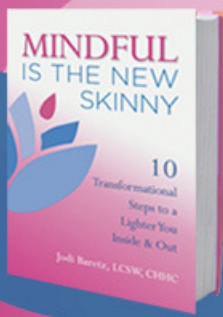


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4. Trust: Honor your feelings and intuitions. If a particular practice or if something doesn't feel right to you in some way, modify or ditch it.

5. Non-striving: Although meditation and mindfulness is hard work, at its core is a non-doing. We are not trying to get anyplace special, just observing what is already here. We are human beings, not human doings. This is difficult because as humans we are constantly doing, going and striving. Just sitting and watching with attention can be boring or frustrating, but it is important and effective. Think of a snow globe. Our thoughts are all the snow that float around when we shake up the globe. What happens when we just allow the snow globe to sit there on the table and leave it alone? The snow begins to settle all by itself. Likewise, our thoughts will settle on their own, if we just observe them and let them be. We do not strive to rid our mind of thoughts or think our way out of our negative thoughts. We observe the thoughts and gently let them settle. In quicksand, the more we struggle, the faster we sink.

6. Acceptance/allowing: Learning to be with the present moment no matter what it contains. It is a willingness to see things as they truly are. Accepting where you are in life, or where you are with your meditation practice and making it all ok for right now. This is much like turning into the skid when driving on ice.



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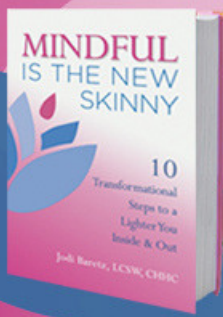
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7. Letting go/non attachment: Why couldn't the Buddha vacuum the couch? He didn't have any attachments. In this tenet, we do not grasp or cling to joy or pain. Everything will change, and we cannot hold on to any moment, thought or feeling. We just experience it in the moment. Letting go of thoughts is also difficult, in everyday life and during our meditation practice.

We constantly spin stories and it can be hard to interrupt them and come back to the present. It is helpful to watch your thoughts or what is happening around you like you are watching a movie. You observe without getting attached to each event. Anything can happen as you go through life. You simply see what is there, without changing it in the moment.



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Catching Monkeys

This passage below illustrates the necessity of letting go and how clinging creates our suffering.

“They say that in India there is a particularly clever way of catching monkeys. As the story goes, hunters will cut a hole in a coconut that is just big enough for a monkey to put its hand through. Then they will drill two smaller holes in the other end, pass a wire through, and secure the coconut to the base of a tree. Then they slip a banana inside the coconut through the hole and hide. The monkey comes down, puts his hand in, and takes hold of the banana. The hole is cleverly crafted so that the open hand can go in but the fist cannot get out. All the monkey has to do to be free is to let go of the banana. But it seems most monkeys don’t let go. (I have been known to be that monkey, you?)