

# The Five Hindrances

## Mindfulness Worksheet

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

Thoughts?  Heart?  Body?  None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



Meditation is among the best tools we have for developing mindfulness. Once we become accustomed to meditation in general, it's time to shift attention to how we're meditating. What is the quality of our attention like?

Buddhist tradition identifies five classic hindrances to meditation, and gives us tools for cultivating their opposite. The hindrances are like veils covering our eyes, they obscure what it is we can notice. Applying mindful awareness to each hindrance lifts the veil and refines the quality of our attention.

Each of the hindrances has both a negative and positive aspect. By finding balance between the two, we find balance in our minds.

### Desire

When desire and attraction of the senses is strong, we become distracted by pleasant or attractive thoughts. In its positive aspect, desire is inspiring. We feel alert and energetic.

When attraction of the senses is too strong, try focusing more tightly on the object of your meditation. If needed, generate repulsion towards the object or person your thoughts are attached to.

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### **Aversion**

When this veil is obscuring our view we feel self-critical, frustrated and annoyed. In it's positive aspect aversion can make us feel undisturbed and present.

When feeling repulsion too strongly in your practice, cultivate joy or compassion. Intentionally notice the positive.

### **Too much energy**

When there's too much energy present we feel restless and anxious. We're unable to be still in body or mind. When just enough energy is present, we feel curious, interested and joyful.

To balance an excess of energy, try closing your eyes or lowering your gaze. Make yourself warmer or darken the room. Breathe more slowly, focusing on the exhale breath. Notice the ways in which you are already calm.

### **Too little energy**

When we meditate with too little energy, we can feel heavy, dull or spaced out. We sometimes fall asleep. When this energy is present in the right amount, we feel relaxed, calm and at peace.

To raise the energy in your meditation, try opening your eyes. Take off a layer or make the room colder. Sit up taller and focus on the inhale breath. Remember the importance of your practice.

### **Doubt**

Doubting the instructions, the one who taught them to you, or doubting yourself can all prevent progress in your meditation. Healthy doubt includes questioning and testing.

To counteract doubt, just continue to practice! Notice the benefits you've received by meditating, the results will speak for themselves.

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### MEDITATION ON THE FIVE HINDRANCES

- Sit comfortably, yet tall, in a quiet place
- Close your eyes, or lower your gaze
- Breathe patiently in and out through your nose
- Focus your attention on breath
- With breath awareness as intention, consider the following
- Are you being pulled towards a pleasant or attractive thought?
- Remember the antidote. Focus more tightly on the breath
- Are you being distracted by negativity? Or self criticism?
- Remember the antidote. Notice the positive
- Are you feeling restless or anxious?
- Remember the antidote. Notice the ways in which you are already calm
- Are you feeling dull or sleepy?
- Remember the antidote. Sit up taller, and breathe in more deeply
- Are you feeling doubt?
- Sit longer in your meditation Recognize all of the benefits you have received

### WHAT DID YOU NOTICE?

Describe the meditation in general

Did you notice one veil in particular, or did each of the five veils come and go?

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Is there one type of hindrance you normally struggle with?



If so, what might you do outside of meditation to help?

Why is a positive distraction still a distraction?

Why is self-criticism something that should be corrected?

Describe what it feels like when you feel the perfect balance of energy in meditation

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Describe healthy doubt

The primary antidote for each of the hindrances is awareness. Why is that so?

### REVIEW

By noticing when each of these hindrances arises and then applying the antidote to your practice, you'll be able to fine tune the quality of your attention as a musician tunes their instrument.

At first we work on a gross level, but over time, we can work with these hindrances ever more subtly. It becomes possible to adjust and fine tune our energy within just one cycle of breath.

While each of the hindrances has several antidotes, the primary solution for each is awareness. There's no limit to our mindfulness, it can be endlessly cultivated and strengthened.

