

# Mindfulness Worksheet - Contentment

At the most basic level, all of our behaviors can be lumped into two piles; the actions we take to get happy, and the actions we take to avoid pain and suffering. While we make different decisions in our striving for happiness, every human being is the same in that we only want to be happy, and to avoid pain.

There's more than one type of happiness. One type of happiness comes from outside of us. This is the dopamine-inducing happiness that comes from getting what we want. For example, the new car, the relationship, praise, or winning the lottery.

This type of happiness is fleeting, and because the nature of all things is to change, the new car will one day become old, the relationship will change, the praise and compliments will wear off, and our lottery winnings will get spent.

A second type of happiness comes from within. This is the serotonin-producing happiness of contentment. This is the feeling you get when recognizing the happiness of your loved ones, when fully immersed in an activity you cherish, when walking out in nature, or when simply being present and still.

While the first type of happiness is more like momentary relief, the second type of happiness is akin to contentment. In spiritual literature, contentment is the highest form of happiness. Contentment says, I have everything I need, and I'm ok, regardless of my external circumstance.

Meditation puts us in touch with this inner type of happiness. In the following meditation, we'll practice noticing contentment.

## Meditation on Contentment

- Find a quiet place to sit
- Set a timer for 5, 7 or 10 minutes
- With your back tall yet neutral, close your eyes
- Breathe patiently and quietly in and out through your nose
- Gently place attention on your breath
- As you notice your breath, generate a deep sense of gratitude for your breath
- Rest the mind in this space, contented to simply be present with your breath and your gratitude
- As distractions arise, respond by saying silently to yourself, 'I am content with the breath'

- And then without any time spent judging, lingering, or further exploring where the mind went, come back to being present with breath and gratitude for your breath
- Repeat this process as many times as you need to, each time saying 'I am content with the breath' before the mind turns back around
- Continue until your timer goes off

## What Did you Notice?

- Describe your experience with the meditation in general
- Describe your understanding of the word 'contentment'
- When do you feel most content?
- When do you feel discontent?
- Did generating gratitude for your breath help you stay focused on breath?
- Did saying the mantra, 'I am content with the breath' help you stay focused on your breath?
- Is there a difference between being distracted and feeling discontent?
- How do you think the ability to focus on the breath relates to contentment?
- How is it that you personally pursue happiness?
- Can you remember a time when you had everything you needed, yet felt discontent?
- Can you remember a time when things were going 'wrong,' yet you felt content?
- How do you think meditation puts you in touch with contentment?
- Why is contentment the ultimate form of happiness?

## Review

Many of us make the mistake of saying, "I'll be happy when....." Yet if we're relying on external circumstances to be just so before we allow ourselves the experience of happiness, we'll never be fully happy. There will always be one more thing to get or do before we're satisfied.

Instead, we can choose to be happy right now, regardless of our external circumstances. Happiness that comes from the inside, regardless of external circumstances, is a lasting and more satisfying happiness.

To connect to the happiness within, we have to trust that it's already there at the core of our being. Meditation helps us peel away the layers of misperception that prevent us from realizing this inner contentment.

Once we connect to this inner contentment it cannot be unseen. It is a lasting state of peace and bliss.