

[Linda Graham, MFT, is a licensed psychotherapist in full-time private practice in San Francisco and Corte Madera, CA. She specializes in relationship counseling for individuals and couples. She is a long-time practitioner and teacher of vipassana (insight) meditation. She is passionate about the integration of Buddhist contemplative practice into Western relational psychology, both empirically validated by modern neuroscience. She publishes a monthly e-newsletter Healing and Awakening into Aliveness and Wholeness, archived on www.lindagraham-mft.net and is writing a book Growing Up and Waking Up: The Dance of the Whole Self.]

a. INTRO: me and Marina, M&P, interns names; how many experienced with M meditation; how many suggest M meditation to clients as outside resource; how many meditate with clients in session?

I. OVERVIEW OF TRAINING: Here's what I'd like to do today and next week.

I want to offer some very practical ways you can introduce M practice into clinical work with your clients, if you choose to. To offer ways M can be a powerful practice to help us as clinicians anchor our awareness in the present moment, here and now, attune to our clients' inner experience more accurately, accept what is without judgment or pathologizing, helping them experience a similar acceptance.

I want to explore what M&P have in common in terms of strengthening the reflective function of our brains, helping clients, clinicians and mediation practitioners see clearly, especially see clearly, without distortion, conditioned patterns of response to life events and to create choice points to change those responses, even re-programming our brains.

And what they have in common, evoking a radical acceptance of all the conditions human beings are heir to; with enough acceptance and compassion that conditioning can be inquired into, unpacked, understood, and either let be or be transformed.

I want to explore some significant differences in the paradigms M&P come from, suggesting how to respect those differences even as we move beyond them toward integration, at least complementarity.

I'll speak a bit to why now, why there is such a compelling interest in mindfulness now, suggesting that the discoveries of modern neuroscience about how our brains work, including the discovery of neuroplasticity less than a decade ago, have been validating the power of mindfulness to change brain structure and function, validating the power of a therapeutic relationship to change brain structure and functioning. Putting the two together – mindful relating or compassionate mindfulness - becomes a very powerful agent of brain change, thus processing of experience change, and thus life change.

As neuroscience explains how M & P work in the brain, I want to counter-balance that with offerings of poetry and exercises that evoke the experience of M & P.

Next week we'll learn how cognitive, psychodynamic, somatic modalities incorporate M as an essential element of treatment. And look at specific techniques you might use in room with clients. I also want us to have time to explore how what you are learning today and next week might apply to clients you work with day in and day out.

Here's an outline, a resource page of books and websites, and poems.

II . Overview of M&P Different paradigms, common processes

Clients need to be able, in therapy and in their lives,
 To be fully engaged in the experience of life, self, others,
 No blocks, no aversion,
 And
 To step back and reflect, to make sense of those experiences
 Without being embedded or stuck in them
 And compassionately accept and integrate those experiences into who they are
 On the path of realizing who they truly are as
 Resilient, alive and whole human beings

a. What Mindfulness Is In Context of Psychotherapy

Jon Kabat-Zinn, founder of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction which pioneered secular applications of mindfulness in medical settings, defines M as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally, to the unfolding of experience moment to moment.” Though M uses the word mind, is based on experience, not on concepts.

So let's have an experience of that. Clinicians' familiarity with, faith in, M as a tool, as a process, pretty essential to helping clients being willing to practice M as a catalyst of awareness and change.

Exercise: Sit quietly; allow your eyes to gently close, be aware of sense of safety and trust, of gentle benevolence in this gathering. Drop down through any thoughts going through mind; drop down to check in with emotional weather; drop down into any body sensations, posture of body, contact with chair; drop into a simple awareness of breathing, gently breathing in and out; steady your awareness on the breath, notice without going any where, any hearing, touch, movement.

b. What Psychotherapy Is In Context of Mindfulness

In modern vocabulary, psychology to refers to the study of the mind or mental processes. Psychotherapy means the treatment of the mind or mental disorders. Greek roots of the

word psyche are breathe, life, soul; the Greek roots of the word therapy is healing. The ancient foundation of psychotherapy is healing of the soul, which is what draws many of us to the field.

Contemporary psychotherapy, the treatment of mental-emotional-relational disorders, influenced partly by the wisdom of ancient contemplative traditions such as mindfulness, and influenced greatly by the findings of neuroscience which every day expand our understanding of how the brain works and how therapeutic change occurs, is now evolving to focus on the possibilities of mental health rather than the inevitability of disorders, a la the positive psychology movement that capitalizes on cultivating strengths and capacities rather than focusing on deficits and pathology. This evolution includes focusing on changing stuck habitual patterns of response to life experience, known as defenses, patterns learned in inter-personal interactions, from life events, from trauma. Tools to make stuck patterns conscious and change them to new more functional, more wholesome responses, intersects nicely with M as a powerful tool to do that.

c. SIMILARITIES BETWEEN (M) AND (P)

Both are processes of experience and reflection using tools of awareness and acceptance.

Mindful awareness – witness awareness – observing awareness - is very similar to the reflective function or observing ego of Western psychology. In both paradigms, mindful awareness or observing ego, capacity to be in experience, not checked out or dissociated, know we're in an experience, be present and aware something is happening, noticing what is happening, then step out of experience we are embedded in, step back from experience and reflect on it; can inquire and investigate or not, but no longer embedded in experience. We are aware that we are observing from a platform outside of experience.

When we can step out of experience, we can see it from another perspective, we can see it as a perspective, we can see it as one of many perspectives, we can see that we have different perspectives from time to time, even moment to moment; we can see that other people can have perspectives different than ours. Mindful awareness and observing share a common theory of mind.

Clients must cultivate capacity for self-awareness, self-reflection to move through therapeutic process and mature as human beings. Non-judgmental acceptance is essential all the way through.

Example: Road rage: someone cuts in front of us almost causing an accident, we react without thinking, step on brakes, flare of anger in reaction to danger/startle; words fly out of our mouth. Mindful awareness, intentional awareness of present moment experience without judgment, stop and breathe. Become aware of physical sensations; spike of adrenalin from stress; clenched jaw and hands, aware of unpleasant tone – anger shattered whatever pleasant daydream we were having; we notice a judgment about dangerous drivers or our own explosion – or any other reactive thoughts, feelings, beliefs.

As the cortex of our brain comes back on line, we may become aware of other people around us again, the reactions of a passenger in our car or the driver we're been so furious at. We may figure they were having a bad day, got spaced out, just didn't see us. We may remember times we didn't see somebody and cut them off. Maybe we realized what we had done at the time and hoped the universe would forgive us for being not such a great driver in that moment and thank you for letting us get away without an accident. Maybe we are moved to some understanding, compassion, forgiveness for the other driver.

It is this capacity of self reflection, self awareness and self-acceptance we want to cultivate in our selves, to be as clear a vessel for the work as possible, and cultivate in our clients. Over and over and over. What are you noticing in the present moment? What are you aware of here and now? Because without this capacity for mindful awareness, observing ego, clients will never be able to see clearly what is happening, see clearly what they might be contributing to what is happening, be able to see what is happening from more than one perspective, see it as a perspective, be able to make new choices of behavior, feelings, thoughts, sense of self and other.

Exercise: Sit quietly; allow your eyes to gently close, be aware of sense of safety and trust, of gentle benevolence in this gathering. Drop down through any thoughts going through mind; drop down to check in with emotional weather; drop down into any body sensations, posture of body, contact with chair; drop into a simple awareness of breathing, gently breathing in and out; steady your awareness on the breath, notice without going any where, any hearing, touch, movement.

Allow yourself to have a thought, or a feeling, about anything at all. Allow the thought or feeling to be there. It's OK to have this thought or feeling. Then step back and see this thought or feeling as a thought or feeling, Oh, I am thinking this now, or this feeling is arising now. Become aware of the awareness the thought or feeling is arising in. Focus your awareness on the awareness that is holding any thought or feeling as it arises, and passes away.

d. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN (M) AND (P)

A very important difference between M & P concerns the stance toward self. Both Buddhist and Western psychology agree that development of a strong coherent flexible sense of self is necessary for mature and adaptive functioning in this world. Much of Western psychology seeks to address the shaping of our sense of self by the conditioning we are all subject to growing up, conditioning simply being the patterns of response that develop in our brains from repeated experiences, especially early interactions with others. If our repeated experiences of feeling, dealing and relating have been less than optimal, our conditioning can de-rail the development of a healthy sense of self into defenses or dissociation. Western psychotherapy seeks to re-condition our conditioning, creating

new experiences in therapy that create new experiences of self and other that help clients recover the resilience and well-being of healthy sense of self.

M, as part of Buddhist psychology, seeks to laser through all that conditioning, whatever patterns have gotten embedded in our neural circuitry, positive or negative, to penetrate through them to a deeper experience, underneath all that conditioning, an open spacious awareness that is the realm of the Unconditioned, the experience of no patterns, no self.

In the Buddhist tradition especially, if a person practices M long enough, skillfully enough, the inevitable outcome becomes the dissolving of self into a spacious no-thing-ness, into the beingness or formlessness of the unconditioned out of which all form arises and into which all form dissolves.

The experience of non-self doesn't mean the personal self doesn't exist, though if client (or we) are vulnerable to a disorganized sense of self, there can be quite a bit of terror at "letting go" of the self; the experience feels like dropping into a Void rather than into a safe Being-ness. But any genuine experience of non-self frees us, however temporarily, from the patterns that constellate as self, even the most intractable of patterns, of the personal self that we have crafted so well and identify with so completely. There is a phenomenological experience of no-thing-ness, just open spaciousness, that creates a limitless sense of possibility and choice.

Practitioners on both sides of this coin agree you have to have a self first to be able to let go of self or ego. Ken Wilbur's model of pre-self, personal self, and transpersonal self is accepted as accurate.

The two views of self and non-self are both necessary, neither alone is sufficient to bring clients to a full healing and authenticity in this world without the other. Integrating M and P promotes the full integration of self and non-self into Whole Self.

Exercise. Dissolve self; go through steps we've been going through; anchor awareness in breathing, become aware of being aware, anchor in awareness, let breath come and go, let any thoughts arising come and go, experience spacious holding of experience.

III. Seven Natural Dovetails of M&P regardless of modality

Moving people from being embedded, stuck in habitual, automatic, conditioned patterns of response to events, breaking the automaticity of our reactivity, stepping back, reflecting, seeing what's happening as one perspective, one view of reality, to come to know and accept there are other perspectives, other ways of perceiving and responding, other options and then choosing wiser, more skillful responses, it is at the heart of M practice, it is at the heart of therapeutic change

a. PRESENCE:

therapist asks client to come out of dissociation and distraction
 to focus on experience of self (or experience of other)
 Client needs to be resourced to do this safely
 Therapist as safe, attuned, empathic self-possessed other
 Is a resource of safe attachment figure
 Therapy process of respectful accepting attention
 So client can feel held coming into own real experience, difficult current or past,
 unknown future. Help clients become present to deeper and deeper layers of experience

First foundation of M – awareness through the senses – would start with body scan and
 with stance of presence:

can we be focused? JKZ attention on purpose

Can we be curious – not aversion

Can we be open and accepting

Can we be with (accept, tolerate, embrace, integrate) David Whyte's Enough

When client can do this, access neural nets of implicit memories

b. ACCEPTANCE

Traditional meditation practice

2nd foundation of M – perception of feeling tones: pleasant, unpleasant, neutral

Our brains are hard-wired to perceive and appraise experience in the moment – instantly.
 Often in form of emotional signal – startle, rage, hurt, fear. “Something’s happening
 here! Pay attention!” Immediately after initial perception of experience, there is an
 appraisal that does not have to be conscious, the amygdala processes thousands
 perceptions in milliseconds without consciousness. And sends signals to the body – safe,
 dangerous, life threatening. Does this even while we’re sleeping.

In M practice, we steady our awareness enough that we can catch this initial perception –
 something just happened different than steady open awareness, and catch the initial
 appraisal - traditionally pleasant, unpleasant or neutral before reacting either –
 behaviorally – acting out, or cognitively labeling, explanations, stories, or before
 responding to manage or fix. – just what is. In P we slow down, notice the shifts in body
 posture, tone of voice, energy level. Individuals can count to 10, couples can take a time
 out. Unpack. What just happened?

P who are meditators, now putting acceptance as pre-cursor to even that 2nd foundation of
 M

Christopher Germer and Ron Siegel in their recent Clinical Handbook of Mindfulness
 define therapeutic mindfulness as “awareness of present experience with acceptance.”

Germer and Siegel say “Although the acceptance component is implied in the classical
 Buddhist texts, it helps to make it explicit for clinical application. The explicit addition

of acceptance to the mindfulness formula makes sense to most psychotherapists. This is especially the case when our patients are confronted with overwhelming traumatic circumstances. Awareness without acceptance can be like looking at a scary scene under a bright floodlight. Sometimes we need softer light, like a candle, to approach difficult experience. [Or the safety of a secure attachment relationship such as we can experience in therapy] The more intensely we suffer, it seems the more we need acceptance and compassion to be able to work with what's occurring in our lives. Conversely, kindness without clear awareness can lead to sugar coating the difficulties of life that need to be addressed. Without awareness, acceptance could become a form of defensive avoidance."

Sylvia Boorstein, beloved meditation teacher, wrote in latest book *Happiness is an Inside Job*, puts metta, loving kindness practice first, then awareness practice, so can hold startle as we begin looking.

Phil Shaver, UC Davis, research shows when people think of a person they are securely attached to before a laboratory activation of a stress response, they respond with less stress than with research subjects who were not so primed.

Women research subjects were, knowingly ahead of time, administered a slight shock to their ankle in Richie Davidson's Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience Lab at U. of Wisconsin. Those women who were alone in the fMRI scanner experienced anxiety ahead of time and slight pain during the shock. Women holding the hand of a lab technician, a stranger to them but a warm hand, experienced less anxiety and less pain. Women holding the hands of their husbands experienced no anxiety and no pain.

This attention in the present moment that includes awareness AND acceptance without reactivity or judgment is very similar to unconditional positive regard of Carl Rogers. Very similar to attending to a moment of subjective experience as described by Daniel Stern in *The Present Moment*. Very similar to what Dan Siegel suggests in *The Mindful Brain*, COAL: curiosity, openness, acceptance, love.

What this acceptance does, is it activates the release of oxytocin in the client's brain. We're familiar with the stress hormone cortisol that is released by amygdala when it perceives threat or danger, activates fight-flight response of SNS. Oxytocin is the hormone of calm and connect. It activates the PNS, immediately lowers cortisol levels in brain and body, immediately lowers heart rate. Known as hormone of safety and trust, it is hormone of bonding and attachment. We activate oxytocin in the client's brain by their experience of our accepting them just as they are. Regulates arousal, calms down stress response to threat, makes it possible to be calm, open to exploration, to do the therapy. We can become an introject of safety, trust, acceptance, belonging, just as in M, practitioners can find refuge in sense of acceptance by Buddha, Quan Yin, Jesus, Mother Mary.

Rumi's Guest House

Exercise: Hand on Heart

Place your hand on your heart. Breathe gently and deeply into your heart center. Breathe into your heart center any sense of goodness, safety, trust, acceptance, ease, you can muster. Once that's steady, call to mind a moment of being with someone who loves you unconditionally, someone you feel completely safe with. This may not always be a partner or a parent or a child. Those relationships can be so complex and the feelings mixed. This may be a good friend, a trusted teacher. It may be me as your therapist. It may be your grandmother, a third grade teacher, a beloved pet. Pets are great.

As you remember feeling safe and loved with this person or pet, see if you can feel the feelings and sensations that come up with that memory in your body. Really savor this feeling of warmth, safety, trust, love in your body. When that feeling is steady, let go of the image and simply bathe in the feeling for 30 seconds.

c ATTUNEMENT

Dan Siegel (The Developing Mind, Mindful Brain, MindSight, MARC)

Pulls together brain research on M from Richie Davidson's Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience Lab at U. of Wisconsin and brain research on empathy and attunement from Marco Iacoboni's discovery of mirror neurons.

In his The Mindful Brain, Dan Siegel suggest that the circuits and structures of the brain involved in M – intrapersonal attunement – are the very same circuits and structures involved in empathy – inter-personal attunement. He calls it the “resonance circuit.”

So, the more we practice M the more we develop the pathways of the brain we use for E. The more we practice E and attunement the more we develop the pathways we use for M. And both M and empathy strengthen the functioning of the pre-frontal cortex which allows clients – anyone – to regulate body arousal, read the mirror neuron signals of others – attune to other- regulate emotions, develop response flexibility, develop self-awareness, develop empathy for others. And extinguish fear.

Most of our therapeutic interventions are designed to help clients strengthen their pre-frontal cortex – the executive center of their brain, so they can do all the steps of the process we've been describing here. M a great support for that neural re-programming.

Rashani: there is a brokenness out of which

2-minute attunement: one minute hand on heart , then pleasant, unpleasant, neutral; hold it in compassion, understanding, acceptance, let it soften and shift.

d. AWARENESS

Awareness is not thinking or feeling; it's the field of Consciousness that conscious thinking and feeling can happen in. Capacity for seeing clearly, for observing, for witnessing discussed in similarities. Apply awareness to 3rd foundation of M, conscious, explicit processing of all mental processes include thoughts and belief systems but also emotions, feelings, moods, and the body reactions, arousal of SNS calm of PNS.

Accessing the neural networks where memories and stories of self are encoded as well as current experience are encoded. Our sense of self, our autobiographical narrative of self, is organized around these encoded neural networks. Annie Lamott: My mind is like a bad neighborhood, I try to never go there alone. We can explore What am I thinking and feeling now. James Baraz, what story am I believing now? When there is enough acceptance, attunement, and awareness, safe to go into bad neighborhood or dark, shadowy basement of psyche.

Exercise: I learned this exercise from Stuart Eisendrath, who researches mindfulness and depression up at UCSF. Settle into a comfortable posture in your body, allow your attention for focus gently inward, begin noticing your breathing, gently in and out. When you're ready, imagine yourself walking down the sidewalk, feeling pretty comfortable. Then notice someone you know coming toward you in the opposite direction on the sidewalk across the street. Imagine waving to them, but they don't respond. Notice your own inner reaction in that instant of no response. You may be just fine; you may think to yourself, oh, they probably didn't see me. You may watch yourself cascade into a jumble of What's wrong with them! How dare they not notice me! Or a quicksand of, Oh, I guess I'm not important to them after all. Whatever you're noticing, just hold it in a spacious awareness and a gentle compassion, this is what is at the moment.

After Presence, Acceptance, Attunement and Awareness – Being With - There can also be a phase of

e. REFLECTION: WORKING WITH

Moment by moment tracking of experience and the tracking of the process of the experience, are the heart of M, the heart of therapy. What is happening inside as I think this, feel this? In walking meditation, the tracking gets subtler and subtler, lift, shift, place, step. In psychotherapy, we track subtler and subtler shifts: shift in content; shift in tone of voice; shift in coherence – articulate – confused; shift in body posture or body sensations.

In addition to focusing attention on actual experience of the moment and all the elaboration of the experience of the moment: I felt this about that or I think this about that, also tracking activity of mind itself. Is the mind is open and neutral or mind is judging and contracting or mind is avoiding something painful or mind is obsessing about something unresolved or mind is amplifying something positive. So that the processing of the mind becomes the object of the reflection. The process becomes the content to be processed.

This capacity to develop skillful meta-processing – awareness and reflection – about any content no matter how afflictive is essential to come out of chaos or rigidity to flexibility and coherence.. This is what’s happening. This is my perception of what’s happening, and here’s my awareness of how I am relating to that, how I am experiencing and processing that.

M training helps the practitioner become aware that when we grasp or avoid we create even more suffering than the initial experience. Very essential in therapy to see how we are relating to something or processing something resolves or heals it or makes it worse.

What we do as therapists; teach clients to do
Become more consciously aware of our experience, our process; then someday choices

Exercise: follow up on Eisendrath exercise

f. WISE DISCERNMENT OF CHOICES

As clients begin to discern what’s skillful and what’s not skillful in their lives, it helps to have a map or model of what truly wise choices are. We look at some of these maps next week in modalities that have their own maps. For now, In psychology, anything that leads to secure attachment. FACES: flexible, adaptive, coherent, energized and stable. In Buddhism, the Wise Effort to consciously let go of unwholesome and deliberately cultivate the wholesome is one of the eight steps of eight-fold path. Lists of wholesome qualities: generosity, compassion, gratitude, perseverance.
Research evidence: M of compassion changes brain even more than awareness of breath

Autobiography in Five Short Chapters

g. AWARENESS OF AWARENESS

M as taught in Buddhist tradition goes one step further beyond reflecting on our processing so we can consciously process experience differently, more adaptively, flexibly, resiliently. Fourth foundation of M: Consciousness itself.

M focuses attention on awareness itself. Consciousness itself. Besides inquiring into what is the nature of my experience in the moment, honestly, and beyond that what is the nature or state of my mind as it processes this experience, truly, with M we become aware of Awareness. We become aware that we are aware, and that this awareness-ing is larger than any moment of experiencing. This awareness allows the dis-identification with any moment of experience as me or mine, allows a stepping back, stepping out of experience, stepping out even of processing the experience, to just rest in Awareness itself. A spacious open experience some call the unconditioned, some call the non-self, not a thing but the experience of no-thing-ness. This resting in –no-thing-ness becomes

the gateway to Enlightenment, another course. Practical values as tools of psychological healing is the dis-embed. I am not this experience. I am not just this experience. I am the awareness that is holding this experience.

When client can dis-embed from what they experience as real reality and realize this is a moment, a form of reality, it's not the ultimate reality, I am bigger than this moment, this experience, they can realize experience a moment of liberation from their conditioning. They have created a genuine choice point of how they choose to relate to their experience and that is the gateway to psychological change and transformation.

All these steps, being with, working with, leads to INTEGRATION, epitome of mental health come to experience of wholeness; core state, true nature, knowing from inside out.

IV. Three Steps of Integrating Mindfulness into Clinical Work

When we as clinicians cultivate our own M, we can steady our presence and engagement with the experience of clients and us in the room. Non-judgmental openness and acceptance of what is happening, compassion for the inevitable suffering of the human condition and the ubiquitous maladaptive strategies from human conditioning. COAL Do we have to do a daily meditation practice to be able to do this? No. Does a daily M practice strengthen those capacities? Absolutely.

a. How many of you have a regular M practice. M can be learned best with guidance of experienced teacher and support of friendly sangha. In fact, most people do learn to practice M in groups, classes, workshops, retreats, because the interpersonal support of community even in silence is helpful when diving into depths of one's own experience. It is simple, but not always smooth, to sit on a cushion or chair, let go of the many, many demands on our attention, focus our awareness inward, anchor our awareness on our breathing as a calming of our nervous system and the chatter of our minds but also as a safe haven to return to when our untrained mind wanders, as it inevitably will. With practice and practice and learning from the experience of others, it becomes more and more possible to settle into a steady reliable awareness that simply is, and for that awareness to notice phenomena arising, the pressure of our hand on our knee, the sound of the heating system, a passing reminder to shop for dinner on the way home, an irritation from a disagreement with a client the day before. Returning our awareness to our breathing to simply be aware over and over and over, until a quiet steady awareness becomes our home base, and everything else happens within it, and disappears again.

Homework

1. Daily meditation practice, 20-30 min, for grounding, centering, healing
 - a. bare awareness: being with what is
 - b. concentration: mantra, object
 - c. cultivation: gratitude, kindness, compassion, awe, reverence

If you're too busy to do this, you're too busy

Your presence, your clarity, your compassion is instrument of work. Do this!

2. Ongoing check-in: every 15 minutes: how am I doing? Am I centered, agitated, spaced?
3. One minute before each client: silence, deep listening, issues and concerns
4. During session: what happens inside you as you
 - Listen to what I'm saying
 - Feel that [emotion] in your body
 - Step back and reflect on what just happened.
5. After session: high-low. High moment of M; low moment of M

b. Mindfulness informs clinical work. Next, we may find our view of experience in the clinical hour informed by M practice. Over time we gain insight into the nature of experience:

- that we are not our experience, we are larger than that so that it's possible, even necessary for us to get out of being embedded in afflictive emotional states or dysfunctional coping patterns. I am an angry person. I notice I am feeling angry right now. I notice my anger is here again.

- that with enough M and compassion, love and awareness, any experience is bearable, any afflictive emotion, any punishing belief system can be held and held and held until we can unpack it, make sense of it, transform it.

-that our own behavior toward our experience, how we relate to it, shapes what we experience and whether we suffer.

- that ease and well-being are the natural states of the heart and mind when they are not caught in greed-, hatred, delusion, in compulsion, avoidance, denial, dissociation.

C. then we can begin to teach M to our clients. M may be cultivated in meditation class, in daily sitting on a cushion, on a silent retreat, and some clients may choose to do that, especially in Bay Area with richness of resources. but it's practiced moment by moment in daily life. In the room in this moment, can we slow down and be with our experience from a stance of COAL, curiosity, openness, awareness, loving. Can we sit with and tolerate this experience together. Not deflecting or pushing it away, nor getting flooded by it either. Can we be present here and now with this. What were you feeling just before you shifted into this experience. Many, many practices teach clients to focus their attention on the experience of the present moment without judgment, with acceptance.. Here are three: I invite you to experience them with me. 1. awareness of breath. 2. body scan; add tensing and relaxing muscles progressive muscle relaxation. 3. Quiet the mind: hand on heart, breathe in warmth, remember a time when you felt truly peaceful, at

ease, bring the feeling of that moment into your heart center, stay there for 45 seconds. 1 minute hand on heart.