**Practice Log – Week 5**

**FORMAL PRACTICE:** Practice at least six times this week, alternating **Sitting Meditation** (guided or unguided) with either the **Body Scan or Yoga** (Yoga 1 or Yoga 2). On the first day, though, try the Soften, Soothe, Allow Meditation. The Soften, Soothe, Allow Meditation is 15 minutes long, so on that day, you will have a shorter practice session (if you’d like a full 30 minutes, you can add silent meditation on your own that day). As before, don’t expect anything in particular from these practices. Just let your experience be your experience.

**INFORMAL PRACTICE:** The informal practice will be to try **Soften, Soothe, Allow** (below)at times when you are experiencing an unwanted emotion (see the Soften, Soothe, Allow process). The unwanted emotion doesn't have to be severe. It could be, for instance, impatience waiting in line or being mildly annoyed by some minor event. ***If, at the end of the day, no unwanted emotion comes to mind****, ignore the “Soften, Soothe, Allow” format, and take the time to feel gratitude for something that happened that day (or even simply for the fact that you have no significant unwanted feelings!). We often don't take time to experience gratitude, so you might see if you can stay with the feeling of gratitude for a moment or two, and maybe even feel it in your body (e.g., warmth in chest, softness in belly, full heart, relaxed neck and shoulders…). You can make a short note about what happened when you did that somewhere on that day’s row of the Informal Practice sheet.*

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| **Date** | **Formal Practice Comments (Yoga or Sitting Meditation)** |
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| **What was the situation? What was happening inside?**  *(body, mind, emotions)* | **What was the strongest emotion you were feeling?**  *(e.g. anger, sadness, grief, impatience, confusion, fear,*  *shame, longing, despair?)* | **Where in your body were you feeling this the most?**  *(e.g. tightness in chest, queasiness in stomach, ache*  *in heart, headache)* | **How did you “do”**  **Soften-Soothe-Allow?**  **What did you notice while you were doing this?** | **What did you notice AFTER**  **you did the process?**  *(body-mind-emotion-action)* |
| ***EXAMPLE***  *My boss harshly reprimanded me in*  *an email. I went through all the*  *things I could say in my defense. My shoulders were tense, my jaw*  *clenched, stomach tight..* | *At first, I was shocked, then felt*  *like I had been kicked in the*  *stomach, I felt vulnerable and*  *angry, but mostly I felt hurt about*  *how unfair he had been.* | *There was a sinking feeling in my*  *stomach, and a tightness because I*  *really thought I had done a good*  *job in the document he wrote to me*  *about.* | *I softened around my stomach,*  *noticed I could relax my shoulders,*  *To this part of me that felt hurt, I*  *offered a silent “of course you feel*  *that way – you wanted praise and*  *you got corrections instead”.* | *It was strange – even though it*  *was me comforting me, I felt understood and less vulnerable. I was able to compose myself and think constructively about how to respond to my boss.* |
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**Informal Practice Log (Soften, Soothe, Allow) – Week 5**

***Soften, Soothe, Allow***

***1. Beginning with Breath and Kindness***

Find a comfortable position, close your eyes, and take ***three relaxing breaths***. Place your hand on your heart for a few moments to remind yourself that you are in the room, and to bring kindness to yourself.

***2. Labeling the Emotion***

Let yourself ***recall a mild-moderately difficult situation*** that you are in right now, perhaps a health problem, stress in a relationship, or a loved one in pain. Do not choose a very difficult problem, or a trivial problem—choose a problem that can generate a little stress in your body when you think of it. Now clearly visualize the situation. *Who was there?What was said? What happened?* Now see if you can ***name*** the strongest emotion—a difficult emotion—associated with that situation: *anger? sadness?grief? confusion? fear? longing? despair?* Repeat the name of the emotion to yourself in a gentle, understanding voice, as if you were validating for a friend what he/she is feeling: “That’s longing.” “That’s grief.”

***3. Bringing Mindfulness of Emotion into the Body***

Expand your ***awareness to your body as a whole***. Recall the difficult situation again and scan your body for where you feel it the most. In your mind’s eye, sweep your body from head to toe, stopping where you can sense a little tension or discomfort. Now ***choose a single location*** in your body where the feeling expresses itself most strongly, perhaps as a point of muscle tension or an achy feeling, like a heartache. In your mind, incline gently toward that spot.

***4. Soften, Soothe, and Allow***

***Soften*** into that location in your body. Let the muscles be soft without a requirement that they *become* soft, like simply applying heat to sore muscles. You can say, *“soft…soft…soft…”* quietly to yourself, to enhance the process. Remember that you are not trying to make the sensation go away—you are just being with them with loving awareness. You can let yourself just soften around the edges, like around the edges of a pancake. No need to go all the way in.

***Soothe*** yourself for struggling in this way. Put your hand over your heart and feel your body breathe. Perhaps kind words arise in our mind, such as, *“Oh my dear, this is such a painful experience. I’m so sorry it’s so hard for you right now”.* If you wish, you can also direct kindness to the part of your body that is under stress by placing your hand in that place. It may help to think of your body as if it were the body of a beloved child. You can say kind words to yourself, or just repeat, *“soothe…soothe…soothe.”*

***Allow*** the discomfort to be there. Abandon the wish for the feeling to disappear. Let the discomfort come and go as it pleases, like a guest in your own home. You can repeat, *“allow…allow…allow.” “Soften, soothe and allow.” “Soften, soothe and allow.”* You can use these three words like a mantra, reminding yourself to incline with tenderness toward your suffering*. If you experience too much discomfort with an emotion, stay with your breath until you feel better.*

***5. Easing back out…***

When you’re ready, ***slowly open your eyes***, letting your attention move out into the world around you.

***NOTE:*** *If, at any point, you experience too much discomfort, become panicky or scared, stay with your breath until you feel better. If things are still too much, try opening your eyes, looking around the room to orient yourself, maybe looking at something that is comforting or soothing to you (a favorite piece of art or photo of a loved one or pet). You may even want to reach out to a friend, take a walk, have a cup of tea. Taking care of yourself, even if it means interrupting the process, is mindfulness in action.*