

MindfulLiving™ Module 5

Pain-Free Living

Chapter 8 - Reading

Pain-Free Living: Responding to Emotional and Physical Pain

Adapted by Shery Clein, MindfulLiving™ Coach
Cultivating Awareness Intelligence

In this module, *Pain-Free Living*, we explore how to respond mindfully to emotional and physical pain. Often, our initial reactions to pain are either to block it out or to be overwhelmed by it. However, through MindfulLiving™, we can cultivate a more balanced and aware approach that leads to genuine healing and growth.

❖ **Blocking: Pushing Pain Away**

One common reaction to pain is to block it out. We might numb ourselves or push through the discomfort by staying busy, distracting ourselves, or even using substances like food, alcohol, or drugs. While this approach might seem effective in the short term, it doesn't address the root cause of the pain. The discomfort often remains, returning stronger than before.

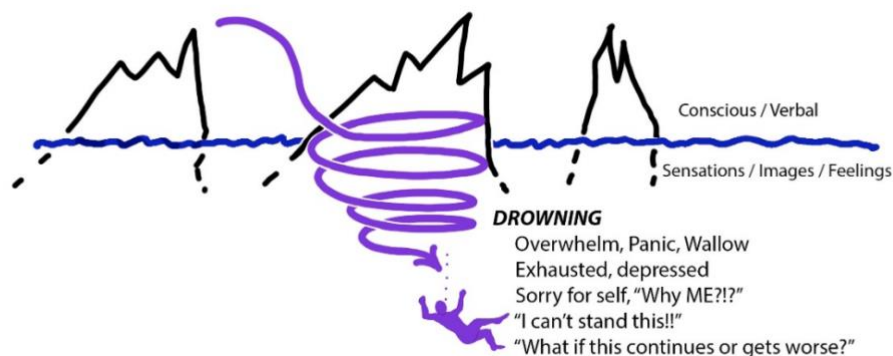


❖ Drowning: Being Overwhelmed by Pain

Another typical response is to be consumed by the pain. This happens when we feel powerless to manage the discomfort and find ourselves overwhelmed by the pain and our fears or judgments about it. This can lead to a sense of hopelessness, leaving us stuck in our suffering.

❖ The Cycle of Blocking and Drowning

Many people find themselves swinging between blocking and drowning. After being overwhelmed by pain (drowning), they might retreat into distractions or self-medication (blocking). This cycle can continue indefinitely, creating a pattern that is hard to break.



❖ MindfulLiving™: Letting Go and Returning

In this course, you've been practising returning to the present moment whenever a difficulty arises. Whether it's a thought, emotion, or physical sensation, you acknowledge it and gently return your attention to your chosen point of focus, such as your breath. "Letting Go and Returning" practice helps build stability, grounding, and resilience. It can lead to a more peaceful state, but if the underlying issue is not fully addressed, it may resurface later.



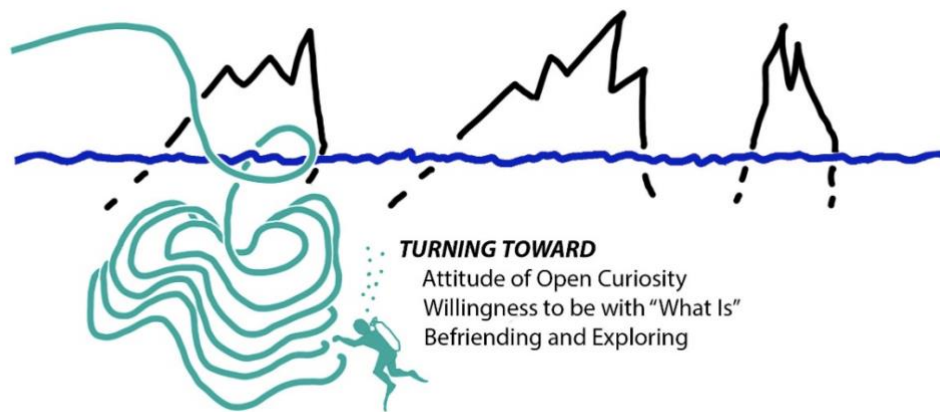
❖ Turning Toward A New Approach

MindfulLiving™ also introduces a powerful yet counterintuitive practice called "Turning Toward." Instead of moving away from discomfort, you move closer to it with curiosity and openness. While this might sound intimidating, it's a gentle process that draws on the skills of awareness and nonjudgment you've been developing throughout this course.

In "Turning Toward," you explore the discomfort with curiosity and compassion rather than trying to escape it. Surprisingly, this approach can reduce the urge to flee from the discomfort and may even dissolve long-standing pain patterns.

❖ Practical Applications

This method is not always easy and requires practice. Timing and setting are essential, and there may be moments when it's appropriate to temporarily set aside the discomfort until you're better equipped to handle it. The *Turning Toward* practices in this course are adapted from Vidyamala Burch's "Five-Step" model, guiding staying grounded while exploring complex sensations or emotions.



❖ Other Approaches to Consider

Several other methods align with the *Turning Toward* approach, including RAIN (taught by Tara Brach), Soften-Soothe-Allow (taught by Kristin Neff), and Focusing (taught by Ann Weiser Cornell). Focusing is remarkably comprehensive, and if you're interested in deepening your practice, excellent resources and online training are available.

By integrating these mindful approaches, *Pain-Free Living* becomes a way to manage pain and a path to greater emotional intelligence and mindful response. With practice, you can transform your relationship with pain and cultivate a life of greater awareness and resilience.

Thank you for engaging in the *Pain-Free Living* module of the MindfulLiving™ program. Your commitment to exploring and understanding your responses to pain is an essential step toward cultivating greater emotional intelligence and well-being. We appreciate your dedication and hope you find these practices empowering and transformative. Please get in touch with Shery Clein with any questions or for further support. ♥

Shery Clein MindfulLiving™ Coach
Cultivating Awareness Intelligence

