

# **MINDFULNESS EMBODIED METAPHORS**

By Manuela O' Connell

All these metaphors show that we can learn from direct body experience!

These are experiential exercises that take approximately 15 minutes to do. They were originally created in Spanish so please feel free to expand the narrow vocabulary!!

## **GOING ALONG WITH THE PROCESS**

(This is a metaphor using the breathing process as the vehicle. The intention in the experiencing is to unpack the breathing as a whole process, a step by step process, rather than a binary in and out. Is an intermediate level mindfulness exercise.)

### **SETTLING**

1. Settle into a comfortable sitting position, as best as you can. Gently close your eyes.

### **BRINGING AWARENESS TO THE BODY AND BREATHING**

2. Bring your awareness to the level of the physical sensations by attending to the whole domain of sensing.
3. Now bring your awareness especially to the changing pattern of sensations associated with your breathing. Choose the place where you can be in touch with your breathing more strongly. Focus in the place of your body where you find the sensations of the breath more vivid and distinct. Perhaps is your chest, or your belly. Focus your attention on the sensations of movement, just as they are. Gently bring your attention with openness and curiosity to the feeling of the breathing and how it moves your body. There is no need to try to control your breath in any way, simply let your body breathe by itself.

#### FOCUSING ON SENSATION AND GOING ALONG WITH THE IN-BREATH

4. Now focus your attention on the mild and subtle sensations of each in-breath as the air comes in your body. Going along with each changing physical sensation pattern of each in breath part of the breathing cycle. As best as you can, stay in touch with each sensation associated to the air coming in your body from the beginning of the in-breath to its full duration, step by step, moment by moment. Explore how that in breath and each moment of it feels, with openness and curiosity. Is there something new you can find in each moment of the whole process of the in breath by going along with it? Allow the experience of the in breath to unfold. Each new in-breath is another chance to explore and investigate the sensations associated with it, moment by moment, step by step.

#### FOCUSING ON SENSATIONS OF THE TURNING POINT BETWEEN THE IN-BREATH AND THE OUT-BREATH

5. Now bring gently your awareness to the sensations of turning point of the in-breath and out-breath. Is it a moment, is it a process? How does it feel? Focus your awareness on the mild sensations of that part of the breathing cycle. With each breath you have a new opportunity to allow your attention to settle and explore the sensations associated with the changing from in-breath to out-breath. Simply allow that experience to unfold.

#### FOCUSING ON SENSATIONS AND GOING ALONG THE OUT-BREATH

6. Now gently escort your attention to the out-breath and the sensations of it. Focus your awareness and go along with all the out breath in each breathing cycle. What do you discover by attending to the whole process of the out-breath?

#### FOCUSING ON THE SENSATIONS OF THE TURNING POINT BETWEEN OUT-BREATH AND IN-BREATH

7. As best as you can, now turn your awareness to the turning point and the changing patterns of sensations between the out-breath and the in-breath. Connect and be in touch with that special moment of each breathing cycle. Let the sensations associated with that moment simply unfold.

#### FOCUSING ATTENTION AND GOING ALONG THE WHOLE PROCESS OF BREATHING

8. Now gently escort your awareness to the whole process of breathing. Go along with it moment by moment, step by step and the changing patterns of sensations in your body associated with it. (You have to leave some time for the client to integrate the experience).

#### PRESENTING AND REFLECTING ON THE METAPHOR

9. “These breathing process (vehicle) and going along with all of it **is the same** (arbitrarily Crel for coordination) as any process in life (target)”. (You can specify, and is strongly recommended, to target a particular client’s process that you want to transfer the function to go along with. For example, I do this metaphor with anxious clients to expose them to the experience of the whole process of a panic attack. But you may do it for any process you like to emphasize the whole of it when the client is only focus in one part and the possibility to go along with it.) (Leave some time to let the client reflect and integrate the experience and the metaphor).

## THE TWO HAND SIDES OF A SITUATION

This is a metaphor that teaches to take different perspectives of one situation and it is also a self as a context experiential exercise.

### SETTLING

1. Settle into a comfortable sitting position, as best as you can. Gently close your eyes. Invite your attention to the body. Put one hand over the other over your lap or any part of your body that feels comfortable for you.

### BRINGING AWARENESS TO THE HANDS

2. Bring your awareness to the level of the physical sensations by attending to the whole domain of sensing.
3. Now bring your awareness especially to the changing pattern of sensations associated with your hands, right into your hand, without looking at them. Allow your awareness to fill your hands from inside to outside, the skin, etc. Open in awareness to any of all sensations in each hand, sensing the fingers and the air that surrounds them, feeling also how it feels on the back of the hands and in the palms, the thumbs and the wrist. Now invite your attention to rest in the sense of touch wherever the hands make contact with each other and with any other part of your body such as your lap. Note the tactile elements and the temperature, any sense of hardness or softness, of coolness or warmth, whatever is present right now.

### MOVING HANDS AND DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

4. Now slowly move the hand that is beneath the other and resting over the palm. Turn your awareness to the sensations that are felt from the hand that is above (one perspective). How does it feel the movement of the other hand while this one rests?.
5. Gently move your attention to the hand that is moving (another perspective of the same situation). Which are the sensations felt by that hand (this is very important! Is the hand's sensing, it's a defusion exercise). How is the hand that is rest above felt by the hand that is moving?
6. Now stop the movement and let both hands and your attention rest.

7. Then, gently start moving the hand that is above. Turn your attention to the sensations of that movement and the feeling of touch of the hand that is below from the perspective of the hand that is moving. What do you discover? Which sensations unfold?
8. Now if you invite your attention to go to the hand that rest underneath, what does that hand feel?
9. Stop all the movements and simply rest for a while.

#### INTEGRATING PERSPECTIVES AND SELF AS A CONTEXT

10. Now slowly and very carefully move both hands. Invite your awareness to settle in the sensations associated with the moving as they appear in one hand, and the as they are felt from the other hand. How can you feel from both perspectives? Does your attention go from one to the other? Is there a possibility to feel and integrate them both?
11. And now ask yourself as the hand are moving and sensing, who is watching that moving and sensing, who is aware of it? Feel that perspective?

#### PRESENTING THE METAPHOR

12. Stop all the moving. The perspectives you have taken in this exercise are the same perspectives you can take in any situation in your life. ( I use a lot this exercise in couples therapy). Simply reflect on them.

## **GOING NUTS**

These exercise is created to state the difference between the being mode and the doing or problem solving mode of mind. I use it in individual settings but it is very appropriate for group settings also. Is interesting to notice what happens in the problem solving mode in a group.

The first part is like the mindfulness of the raisin exercise.

### **1. Holding**

- First seat in a comfortable position as best as you can. Gently close your eyes
- Just rest your hand with palm up as gesture of reception and receiving. You will receive and object. Notice your attitude towards it. Is it curiosity? Is it anxiety? What is?
- Hold the object in the palm of your hand once you have received it (is a nut in a nutshell). Focus on the sensations but at the same time be aware of what your mind is telling you.

### **2. Touching**

- Turn the object over your fingers, exploring its texture, the sensation of touch landscape. Be with the nut, feeling all the different textures of it.

### **3. Hearing**

- Now gently move the nut close to one ear. What is the soundscape of it? Can it make any sound while you move it? Can you make any sound with it? Just focus on the hearing.

### **4. Smelling**

- Holding the nut beneath your nose, with each inhalations rink in any smell, aroma, or fragrance that may arise, noticing as you do this anything interesting that may be happening in your mouth or your stomach.

### **5. Seeing**

- Take time to really see it, gaze at the nut with care and full attention. Look what you discover of this nut.

### **6. Placing**

- Now slowly bring the nut up near your lips, noticing how your hand and arm know exactly how and where to position it. Feel what happens in your sensations around your body but also in your mind and in your emotions.

This is the problem solving part of the exercise

### 7. Opening

- Now open the nutshell in order to be able to eat it. Be aware everything that happens in your sensations thoughts and feeling when you have this problem to solve.
- ( During this part of the exercise is important to coach in noticing all the different attitudes toward solve in it like getting anxious, telling itself it is impossible, looking for help, getting freeze, etc)

### 8. Metaphor

- Once you manage to open the nutshell simply close your eyes and reflect in the different way you behave during the two parts of the exercise. **Trying to open the nutshell is the same as trying to solve any problem you have in your life.** Also reflect about how is your general approach to solving problems as this exercise has told you.