

4 STAGES OF THE SELF – STAGE 1: “KNOW THYSELF” (Part 1)

Reflections and Suggested Journal Prompts

OVERVIEW: This document contains the materials needed for Class 1 of Course II in our series on an *Introduction to Mindfulness & Meditation*. Our goal in this class is to expand on the concepts presented in Course I through our review of “*The 4 Stages of the Self*.” In this course we will cover the first 2 stages of the self, including *Know Thyself* and *Heal Thyself*. We will spend two classes on each of these topics. Each week we will email you a link to our website that will include: (1) A downloadable PDF with overview of core concepts with journal prompts, (2) Video reviewing weekly concepts and journal prompts, (3) Weekly guided meditation & breath work, and (4) Yoga flow for the week with related breath work and flow.

In Class 1 we will cover Part 1 of *Know Thyself*. This includes the topics: (A) Know Conscious Awareness & Controlled Breath, and (B) Know Acceptance. The overview and journal prompts for these two concepts are included in this handout. Each week we will send out a link with the resources for that week.

NOTE: *These reflections and suggested journal prompts are offered to assist in asking questions, from a mindfulness perspective, to help move one toward greater understanding of the self while building strengths in the areas of mindfulness. However, due to the probing nature of these questions and reflections, they could stir up challenging and difficult topics or thoughts. PLEASE do not push into areas that are too uncomfortable. Self-care is critical and do only what you feel comfortable with. Take breaks, share with a friend or loved one, or call for assistance if in any way you feel the need. A list of resources and contacts is at the bottom of the page. Be gentle, go slowly, hold all in love, grace, and non-judgment. It is a process. We are never a finished product! If any questions let us know.¹*

“To know thyself is the beginning of wisdom.” — Socrates

I. KNOW THYSELF (Part 1) – Before you start with these reflections and journal suggestions, we invite you to do some breath work with a short period of quiet or meditation. Give yourself time and space to be present with these questions and to really listen to your heart and spirit, and to the responses that arise. Find a safe and private location with enough time to breathe, center, journal, and go within.

A. Know Conscious Awareness and Controlled Breath - These are the first two C’s of the 8 C’s of Mindfulness (all 8 are set out below). We will include two in each segment of this course. These two focus on developing the ability, using your breath to center and be grounded, to quiet the mind, to go within, to sit with yourself while holding space for whatever arises, to listen and discover. *Knowing Thyself* requires us to shut off the noise and distractions so you can figure out what you really believe and think, what and how you feel, and why. This stage focuses on learning to sit quietly, to breathe, to clear your mind, and to have an awareness of your thoughts and emotions when they arise. With this awareness we can notice what these thoughts and emotions are, avoid getting swept away by them, and then examine them, hold space for them. This develops the ability to recognize the object of your attention and to hold it (whatever it is) in grace, love, and without judgment. Then proceeding with intention and in alignment with your values as to how you want to show up in these moments.²

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.” — Viktor E. Frankl “Man’s Search for Meaning.”

¹ A warm thank you and acknowledgement to George Mumford for allowing us to adapt and use certain concepts from his work in “*The Mindful Athlete*.” We recommend if you have not done so, to read the book as it is a wonderful introduction (and guidebook) to mindfulness and its applications and benefits in day-to-day life.

² For a review of the “S.T.O.P.” method, see Course 1 materials and/or go to: <https://www.mindful.org/the-s-t-o-p-practice-creating-space-around-automatic-reactions/>

Questions for reflection:

1. In what ways do you create time or space to breathe, center, and quiet the mind?
2. If you do not do this or struggle with it, why and what gets in the way?
3. What beliefs, thoughts, or emotions do you have about this type of practice and why?
4. If they are part of what is blocking you, how true are these and where do they come from?
5. What is one step you could take this week to find space each day for this?
6. What obstacles might you face and how can you overcome them?

B. Know Acceptance – We sometimes avoid reviewing or honestly assessing our lives. We find ways to not see our truth, to deny or reject certain realities, and in doing so can spin all kinds of stories to make it all make sense to ourselves. But we have found that you can't get to where you want to go until you honestly review and accept where you've been, where you are, and what is happening now.

“Acceptance” means looking with as much clarity and honesty as we can at our lives, including what is going on in the moment, and then just letting it be what it is. Acceptance allows us to experience what is arising without *reacting* to it. We can just take it in and then see it for what it is and why it is. Without acceptance, we cannot be fully present with what is and see it clearly. *“For after all, the best thing one can do when it is raining is let it rain.”*-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. It rains on all of us. If it is raining on you, let it rain and watch, listen, and see what the rain is all about, without fighting, resistance, or avoiding.

Acceptance is also done without judgment, beating yourself up, or anger. Let all the doubt and negative self-talk go and just look at your reality as clearly as you can. Doing so in love, with grace, and non-judgment. This can be hard to do after years of conditioning ourselves and listening to our own spin about our lives. But this honest yet loving assessment starts us back into trusting ourselves and eventually moves us towards healing. *“Serenity comes when you trade expectations for acceptance.”* - Buddha

“Acceptance” does not mean we are content with everything in our lives. It just means we honestly see and acknowledge what is. With acceptance, we can release resistance, judgment, guilt, and find peace with what is – we *let it be*. *“You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.”* - Joseph Goldstein. This allows us to start taking steps to build the future we want. Not putting energy into what was, but what we want and will be. After awareness, acceptance is one of the core foundations for Knowing Thyself.

“Accept – then act. Whatever the present moment, accept it as if you had chosen it.....this will miraculously transform your whole life.” – Eckert Tolle. As they say, life doesn't happen *to* us, it happens *for* us.

Questions for reflection:

1. How clearly and honestly are you able to examine your life, past and present?
2. If it is difficult, what blocks you or gets in the way of doing so? Why?
3. To what degree do you feel you have found acceptance with your life?
4. To the degree you have not, what resistance or obstacles do you face in finding it, and why?
5. What beliefs, thoughts, or emotions/feelings come up for you when you try to do this?
6. Where do they come from and how valid or true are they for you now?
7. How would it impact you to be able to let go of the past and any frustrations with the present?
8. What would the impact be on you if you could mentally and emotionally set all of this down?
9. What is the impact on you if you cannot find acceptance with certain parts of your life?
10. What is one step you can take to move towards acceptance?
11. What obstacles might you face and what can you do to overcome them?

HIDDEN PEARLS PODCAST/MVP/PAF - MINDFULNESS & MEDITATION COURSE II
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Next Week - Class 2 – Know Thyself (Part 2)

C. Know your Beliefs, Thoughts, Emotions:

D. Know Your Body – Know Your Stress:

E. Know Your Values – “Loving Kindness” Toward Self and Others:

8 C’s (Tools) of Mindfulness

Conscious Awareness	Compassionate Heart
Controlled Breath	Connected Body
Calm Mind	Courageous Action
Clear Vision	Collective Reflection

SUPPORT CONTACT INFO:

Suzi Landolphi – MVP Clinical Director 818-470-2013; Suzi@vetsandplayers.org	NFLPA resource for Current Players https://nflpa.com/active-players/wellness-resources
Bruce Kittle – HPP Course Instructor 405-623-9460; CoachKittle61@gmail.com	NFLPA resource for Former Players https://nflpa.com/former-players/health-wellness?