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Morality, Meditation, and Wisdom: An Exploration of the Buddhist Foundation of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

HOVEDOPPGAVE

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Abstract

Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs), of which Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is one of the most widely used, have seen an exponential increase in research and application the last decade. MBSR employ a set of techniques taken from Buddhist meditation. Common to all Buddhist traditions are the Four Noble Truths. In these teachings mindfulness-meditation is one part of a larger framework called the Threefold Training. In this framework, mindfulness-meditation is accompanied by both cultivation of moral conduct, and by contemplations of universal characteristics of experience, which ultimately leads to a clearer understanding of oneself and the world. In the Buddhist tradition these three components are viewed as co-dependent, and essential for healing. In this thesis, this broader training is explored, and the extent to which these components have been incorporated into MBSR, both in explicit and implicit manners, is discussed. Finally, challenges involved in employing elements taken from the Buddhist teachings in a secular psychotherapeutic setting are discussed.

Keywords: MBSR, Buddhist psychology, morality, insight meditation

Sammendrag

I det siste tiåret har forskning og bruk av Mindfulness-baserte intervensjoner (MBIer), hvorav Mindfulness-Basert Stressreduksjon (MBSR) er en av de mest brukte, økt eksponentielt. MBSR gjør bruk av teknikker hentet fra buddhistisk meditasjon. Felles for alle buddhistiske tradisjoner er de Fire Edle Sannheter. I denne læren er mindfulness en av tre komponenter som utgjør den Tredelte Treningen. I dette rammeverket er mindfulness-meditasjon ledsaget av både fokus på et moralsk levesett, samt refleksjoner rundt "tilværelsens tre kjennetegn", som videre fører til en klarere forståelse av seg selv og verden. Den buddhistiske tradisjonen ser på disse tre komponentene som gjensidig avhengige, og nødvendige for frigjøring fra lidelse. I denne oppgaven utforskes dette buddhistiske rammeverket, og i hvilken grad disse komponentene er inkludert i MBSR—både eksplisitt og implisitt—diskuteres. Til slutt diskuteres utfordringer knyttet til bruken av elementer hentet fra den buddhistiske læren i en sekulær psykoterapeutisk sammenheng.

Nøkkelord: MBSR, buddhistisk psykologi, moral, innsiktsmeditasjon

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If you let go a little, you will have a little peace.

If you let go a lot, you will have a lot of peace.

If you let go completely, you will have complete peace. (Chah, 1994, p. 116)

1. Introduction

While the practice of mindfulness meditation has a prehistory in eastern contemplative traditions that goes back more than 2500 years, the last 25 years have seen a rapid growth in the interest and popularity of mindfulness in western secular culture (Van Gordon, Shonin, Sumich, Sundin, & Griffiths, 2014). The practice is now quickly moving into the mainstream of medicine, psychology, and the larger society (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2013), finding acceptance as an effective intervention for a wide range of illnesses as well as a help in coping with the stressors of everyday life (McWilliams, 2012). In 2012 alone, over 500 articles were published on the subject. This is more than double the amount of articles published on the same subject in the eighties and nineties combined (Shonin, Van Gordon, & Griffiths, 2013). Recent surveys by the Mental Health Foundation (MHF) have found that both practitioners and the general public have a strong belief in the positive effect of mindfulness (Shonin et al., 2013; Shonin, Van Gordon, & Griffiths, 2014). Amongst general practitioners in the UK, 75% reported a belief that mindfulness is beneficial for people struggling with mental health issues, while 86% of British adults agree that "people would be much happier and healthier if they knew how to slow down and live in the moment" (Mental Health Foundation, 2010, p. 12).

Different Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) are now applying principles of mindfulness as a secular treatment to a wide range of somatic and mental illnesses in both group- and one-to-one settings. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) are two of the most prominent group-based programs. Following a similar structure, both programs consist of weekly meetings over a time period of 8 weeks, one all-day retreat, and guided mindfulness exercises (Santorelli, 2014; Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2001). Dialectic Behavior Therapy and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy are examples of interventions where mindfulness is integrated as part of individual psychotherapy (Hayes & Strosahl, 2004; Linehan et al., 1999). There are

hundreds of research papers exploring the effect of MBIs on conditions including depression, relapse prevention, substance abuse, anxiety, eating disorders, chronic pain, psoriasis, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and ADHD, to mention a few (Cullen, 2011).

A meta-analysis conducted by Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt, and Oh (2010) suggested that mindfulness-based therapy had moderate effects on improving anxiety (Hedges's g = 0.63) and mood symptoms (g = 0.59) from pre- to posttreatment in 1140 participants treated for a range of medical and psychiatric conditions. When only patients with anxiety and mood disorders were investigated, even larger effect sizes were found, both for anxiety symptoms (g = 0.97) and for mood symptoms (g = 0.95). Another meta-analysis by De Vibe, Bjørndal, Tipton, Hammerstrøm, and Kowalski (2012) examined 31 RCTs and found post-intervention effect sizes as follows: decrease in anxiety (Hedges's g = 0.53), in depression (g = 0.54), in stress/distress (g = 0.56), increase in quality of life (g = 0.57), and improved somatic health (g = 0.31). A recent meta-analysis conducted by Goyal et al. (2014) reviewed 47 studies with more than 3500 participants, and this showed slightly more conservative effects sizes for both improved anxiety (Cohen d = 0.38 after 8 weeks of treatment and d = 0.22 at 3-6 months follow-up), and depression (d = 0.30 at 8 weeks and d = 0.23 at 3-6 months).

Despite the well-documented effects of, and widespread use of mindfulness-based methods, there is no universally accepted understanding and definition of mindfulness in the field today (Shonin et al., 2014). Bodhi (2013) argues that the term is becoming vague and elastic, open to individual readings. According to Dorjee (2010), the predominating understanding of the term *mindfulness* in western psychology has its origin in the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program (Kabat-Zinn, 1990), which in turn has its roots in both Zen and Theravada Buddhism (Kabat-Zinn, 2013b). In MBSR, the term mindfulness is defined as a type of awareness (…) "that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally to the unfolding of experiences moment by

moment" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). The word *mindfulness* has also been used before MBSR, as a translation for the Pāli word *sati*, a word around which there is a certain ambiguity (Bodhi, 2013). Although Sati in ancient Indian psychology originally meant *memory*, the Buddha gave the word a new meaning in line with his own system of psychology and meditation (Bodhi, 2013):

> And what, bhikkhus [monks], is the faculty of mindfulness? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple is mindful, possessing supreme mindfulness and discretion, one who remembers and recollects what was done and said long ago. He dwells contemplating the body in the body … feelings in feelings … mind in mind … phenomena in phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. This is called the faculty of mindfulness. (SN 48:10)

This new meaning of the word sati is further explained in the Abhidhammattha-sangaha as a mental factor that signifies presence of mind and attentiveness to the present. It's characteristic is "not wobbling", i.e. not floating away from the object. The function of sati is absence of confusion or non-forgetfulness (Anuruddha & Bodhi, 2000).

The contemporary understanding and practice of mindfulness has in the later years received criticism on different grounds. One of the lines of criticism has raised the question as to whether something is lost as mindfulness is taken out of its Buddhist context, and into a secular modern practice. According to Purser and Loy (2013) the modern mindfulness movement has been eager to remove itself from all signs of Buddhism and religiosity, losing crucial aspects of itself in the process. This view is supported by Shonin et al. (2014), who claim that the MBIs are lacking a congruent foundation, and are applying mindfulness in a fashion that is lacking necessary context. This critique comes out of the observation that mindfulness in Buddhism is never practiced as a stand-alone technique, but rather as one

component in an interdependent set of practices, only together thought to lead to freedom from suffering (Bodhi, 1994; Shonin et al., 2014). Madsen (2014) raises the question of whether mindfulness as taught in the MBIs focus too much on people adapting to their circumstances, not seeing the potential for critically discussing and changing them. He argues that this in turn may make people more passive in their own lives and in relation to wider social and ecological challenges. Purser and Milillo (2014) argue that this uncoupling of mindfulness from its Buddhist context may reduce it to a technique in danger of being misappropriated for the maintenance of institutional and corporate power.

Critiques regarding the uncoupling of mindfulness from its original context has also been raised by Buddhist authors, who question whether the MBIs are decontextualizing, "watering down", and removing essential elements from the broader training in mindfulness (Dreyfus, 2013; Titmuss, 2013). In particular, many have questioned the way the modern mindfulness movement relates to the Buddhist themes of nurturing ethical behaviour and wisdom (Purser & Milillo, 2014; Shonin et al., 2013, 2014). Especially Monteiro, Musten, and Compson (2014) has sparked a debate with their investigation on the role of ethics in mindfulness-based interventions. The larger part of the February issue of the Springer journal Mindfulness was devoted to the ensuing discussion. Amaro (2015), in a response to Monteiro et al. (2014), tied this issue in with another important discussion in the field, namely the meaning and definition of mindfulness (notably: Bodhi, 2013; Dreyfus, 2013; Gethin, 2013), and highlighted the importance of both ethics and wisdom in effective practice. In Buddhism the Three Trainings—moral discipline, meditative practices, and wisdom—provide the broader context in which *right mindfulness* can be cultivated (Shonin et al., 2014). Furthermore, these Three Trainings exist within the Four Noble Truths, a fundamental framework of suffering and healing common to all Buddhist traditions (Bodhi, 2005). While

discussions about the inclusion of ethics in the MBIs have appeared recently, the role of insight-meditation in secular practices has been less discussed.

On the other hand, concerns have also been raised around the possibility that too much Buddhism is being taught in the different MBIs (Shonin et al., 2013). Shonin et al. (2013) notes that there is a need for more clarity and transparency regarding the extent to which the curriculum taught in the different MBIs is grounded in Buddhist philosophy. According to Shonin et al. (2013) there seem to be an incongruence between how leading proponents in the field of MBIs, such as Jon Kabat-Zinn, today describe mindfulness, and how mindfulness in turn is presented within the clinical settings of the MBIs. While presenting mindfulness as "basically just a particular way of paying attention" (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p. 47) in his initial book on the MBSR program, Kabat-Zinn has later referred to MBSR as a portal to the *Dharma* – the teachings of the Buddha (Shonin et al., 2013). According to Shonin et al. (2013) this issue has large ethical implications for participants of MBIs, and he raises the question of whether service-users are in fact being taught a re-contextualized version of Buddhism in the MBI courses. As pointed out by Lindahl (2015), mindfulness programs being introduced in public schools and other new arenas, calls for greater clarity regarding the extent to which a Buddhist framework exist in the MBIs.

Kabat-Zinn (2013b) notes that when introducing the concept of mindfulness in his seminal book *Full Catastrophe Living* (Kabat-Zinn, 1990), the goal was to embody the essence of the teachings of the Buddha, but at the same time present it in a way that was accessible to mainstream Americans struggling with stress and illness. In doing this, he took great care in presenting MBSR not as a Buddhist, or New Age phenomenon, as this could undermine the image of MBSR as a legitimate part of serious medical care (Kabat-Zinn, 2013b). According to Kabat-Zinn (2013b), making the MBSR program accessible to as many people as possible, can be seen as a skilful means of bringing the Buddhist teachings and

clinical medicine together, continuing a pattern seen in the history of Buddhism of modifying the presentation of the teachings to fit new cultures and customs (Baumann, 2001).

A full understanding of how the MBIs relate to the Buddhist tradition from which the concept of mindfulness has sprung, seem to be lacking in the field today. There also seem to be a need for a greater comprehension of how mindfulness is understood and practiced in its original setting. How can we understand the role of Buddhism and Buddhist philosophy in the MBIs today? How are the essential components of Buddhist practice described in the original canonical scriptures, and in what way are these represented in the practice of MBSR? Furthermore, what potential challenges do the MBIs face in bringing a Buddhist practice into modern secular healthcare?

The primary focus of the thesis is to investigate the nature of the Buddhist foundation of mindfulness-based interventions, and to discuss the extent to which a Buddhist framework exists in the MBIs. Specifically, we have chosen to investigate MBSR, as this was the first intervention formally bringing mindfulness into western medicine and science, and is one of the most widely used forms of MBI. We want to investigate the degree to which a broader Buddhist framework, the Four Noble Truths, exists in MBSR, explicit or implicit, and discuss possible challenges with implementing such a framework in a secular context.

1.1 Research Question

The thesis will explore and discuss the following research question: To what degree is the broader Buddhist framework, the Four Noble Truths, represented in MBSR, explicitly or implicitly, and what are the challenges in implementing such a framework in secular contexts?

1.2 Method

In order to discuss our research questions we have chosen to write a theoretical analysis of the MBSR program and discuss how its structure and content relates to the

fundamental philosophical framework in Buddhism. Greater knowledge of the Buddhist framework might deepen the understanding of mindfulness as a form of treatment. Further, clarity around how it is incorporated in the MBSR program in explicit and implicit ways is lacking in the field, and could be an important gain in the theoretical understanding of MBSR. It may elucidate the functions and purposes of the various elements employed, as well as how these elements mutually influence and support each other.

In chapter 2 we examine and explore the MBSR program by making use of the principal MBSR literature. In this chapter, we seek to retain a language and a form that is faithful to the way the founders of the MBSR program chose to employ in communicating their own curriculum. In chapter 3 we discuss the core Buddhist teachings by making use of foundational Buddhist texts. The main focus is on the frameworks that describe the process and development of mindfulness as a means to higher wellbeing: the Four Noble Truths and the Threefold Training. These frameworks are considered fundamental in all the different schools of Buddhism (Rahula, 1981). In chapter 4 we compare the two traditions, and discuss the explicit and implicit ways the theoretical Buddhist foundation has been used as an underpinning for the MBSR program. With explicit usage we refer to sections where the material is discussed in a fashion similar to the way it is discussed in the Buddhist texts, and may or may not be accompanied with references to the Buddhist tradition. With implicit usage we refer to instances in which the material is discussed in a way that is more indirect or vague than commonly done in the Buddhist texts, and in which the link to Buddhism is usually not made clear. In chapter 5 we discuss the choices the founders of the MBSR program made regarding the presentation of mindfulness as a treatment option to healthcare patients. We also discuss challenges connected with employing Buddhist-based programs and treatments in secular western settings, as well as the limitation and implications of our study.

We have chosen to limit our focus to textual material concerning the fundamental principles underlying both Buddhist meditation as well as the MBSR program. We have not aimed at being exhaustive in the selection of texts from the two traditions, but have used sections that we have considered relevant to our research questions.

1.2.1 Choices Regarding Selection of Literature and Tradition. We have prioritised the MBSR-literature according to how much bearing it has on how the MBSR-courses are conducted. As primary sources, we use the two documents published by the University of Massachusetts Medical School from where the MBSR program originates. The first stipulate the Standards of Practice for MBSR-courses (Santorelli, 2014), and the second is the MBSR Curriculum Guide (Blacker & Kabat-Zinn, 2009). As secondary sources we use Kabat-Zinn's first book Full Catastrophe Living (1990) and the MBSR Workbook by Stahl and Goldstein (2010). As tertiary sources we use Kabat-Zinn's later writings (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, 2005, 2013b) as well as other publications that discuss the principles and practices of MBSR. The reason we make a distinction between his first book and his later is that the first book is close to the original design of the MBSR-courses, both in time and in style. In the later books there are blurry lines between MBSR, Kabat-Zinn's own thoughts, and the presentation of the Buddhist teachings, sometimes making them difficult to differentiate. However, the later books are valuable in that they often explicitly discuss the principles that are only implicitly included in the primary and secondary sources.

Within Buddhism there are several different schools. These schools have their foundation in the same collection of texts, the Tipiṭaka (also referred to as the Pāli Canon), albeit of slightly different versions (Bodhi, 2005). As the primary source for this text we have chosen to focus on the canonical scriptures of the Theravada school. We made this choice because the Theravada Canon is widely acknowledged as the version that has remained most conservative with regards to altering the texts (Bodhi, 2005), and is also cited as an important

influence in the MBIs (Kabat-Zinn, 2013b; Teasdale & Chaskalson, 2013a, 2013b). The Tipiṭaka is grouped into three sections, the Sutta Piṭaka – the discourses, the Vinaya Piṭaka – teachings that deal mainly with the monastic rules and regulations, and the Abhidhamma Piṭaka – a systemization of the teaching (a later addition not without controversies with regard to authenticity) (Anuruddha & Bodhi, 2000). We have chosen to focus on material from the Sutta Piṭaka, as this section is most relevant to our research question. The Sutta Piṭaka is grouped into five sections and contains more than 10.000 discourses. Each of these sections is translated separately in different versions. The discourses are neither organized chronologically nor according to subject, but according to their length, which makes the Tipiṭaka difficult to navigate (Bodhi, 2005). The translations we have made use of, as well as explanations regarding the citations of the Tipiṭaka can be found in Appendix A. Two of the most central discourses from the Sutta Piṭaka have been provided in Appendices B and C as examples of the style these texts are written in.

As secondary sources we use the classical commentaries; Visuddhimagga (Buddhaghosa, 1979) and Vimuttimagga (Upatissa, 1961), as well as the classical commentaries of each of the sections of the Sutta Piṭaka, which are frequently quoted in the footnotes of the translations. As tertiary sources we use contemporary Buddhist writings by members of the Theravāda monastic community.

1.2.2 On the usage of Pāli words: The Tipiṭaka is written in the Pāli language, a dead language related to Sanskrit. English translations exist, but as the Pāli language is highly specialized and specific to Buddhist Psychology, many terms are difficult to translate into English (Nyanatiloka & Nyanaponika, 1980). We have decided to leave some words in the original Pāli. These words either lack sufficiently corresponding terms in the English language altogether (such as concentration or meditation for jhāna), or the translated words

have associations in English that would occlude the meaning (such as stress or suffering for dukkha). A glossary of terms can be found in Appendix D.

2. Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

Mindfulness has been described by Kabat-Zinn (1990) as "just a particular way of paying attention". Still, MBSR has been the topic of numerous books, an MBSR course lasts for 8 weeks, and becoming a certified MBSR instructor requires multiple courses and retreats. What, then, does the MBSR program consist of? The founders of the program has underlined that MBSR is not a clone- or franchise approach, and that there are different ways of structuring an MBSR course, depending on the experience of the students in the particular group (Santorelli, 2014). However, Santorelli (2014) stresses that there are standards of form and content that has to be met for a program to call itself MBSR. What are the standards of MBSR practice, and how is mindfulness meditation understood and taught within this framework? In this chapter we will investigate the origins, structure, methods and key characteristics of MBSR.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is a group-based 8-week course. It originated in The Stress Reduction Clinic founded by Jon Kabat-Zinn at the Massachusetts Medical Center in 1979 (Cullen, 2011; Dobkin, Hickman, & Monshat, 2014; Kabat-Zinn, 2013b), with its first patients being non-responders to existing medical treatments; patients who were "falling through the cracks of the healthcare system" (Kabat-Zinn, 2013b, p. 294). MBSR is now being utilized in a multitude of medical settings to treat conditions ranging from depression and anxiety to fibromyalgia and chronic pain (Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004). It is also used in non-medical settings such as schools, prisons, and the workplaces (Santorelli, 2014). According to Blacker and Kabat-Zinn (2009), the core of the program is a relatively intense training in mindfulness meditation and mindful yoga, with the

aim of teaching participants how to apply mindfulness to the range of challenges arising in their everyday lives.

2.1 The Theoretical and Philosophical Origins of MBSR

The primary sources of MBSR (Blacker & Kabat-Zinn, 2009; Santorelli, 2014) contain no references about the Buddhist origin of the mindfulness practices taught in the course. Kabat-Zinn's early articles about MBSR (or SR&RP—the Stress Reduction and Relaxation Program—as it was referred to at that time) describe that mindfulness-practices originate from the meditative Buddhist traditions (Kabat-Zinn, 1984; Kabat-Zinn et al., 1988; Kabat-Zinn, Lipworth, & Burney, 1985). Kabat-Zinn (1990) mentions in the introduction to his first book that the SR&RP was based on the systematic training of mind developed in the Buddhist traditions. However, he also take care to point out that what is taught is not essentially "Buddhist": "Although at this time mindfulness meditation is most commonly taught and practiced within the context of Buddhism, its essence is universal. Mindfulness is basically just a particular way of paying attention" (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p. 12). Kabat-Zinn further argues that: "In fact one of its major strengths is that it is not dependent on any belief system or ideology, so that its benefits are therefore accessible for anyone to test for himself or herself" (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, pp. 12-13). Although Kabat-Zinn affirms the Buddhist origins of the mindfulness practices, he emphasises the universal and belief-independent nature of mindfulness. Perhaps for that reason, references to Buddhist teachings or the usage of Buddhist terms are non-existent in the main text of the book. In a recent article, Kabat-Zinn (2013b) has explained that this was deliberate in order not to evoke association to religion or to new-age movements, as this was seen as important in order to gain academic and professional acceptance for the MBSR program. He further says that MBSR was developed as a skilful means for bringing the Buddhist teachings into secular mainstream settings. Skilful means is an expression often used in Buddhist writings referring to pragmatic ways of

achieving a specific goal, often requiring compromises (Sumedho, 1983). Kabat-Zinn's later writings are replete with Buddhist terms, teachings, and references (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, 2005, 2013b). It seems evident that the connection between MBSR and Buddhism has gradually become increasingly clear and more explicit, as the program has gained acceptance and recognition within the scientific community.

2.2 The Structure of MBSR

MBSR is offered in a group format (Santorelli, 2014). Dobkin et al. (2014) argues that it is not supposed to be group therapy or a support group, but that the group format enables a sharing of experience that in turn facilitate the development of mindfulness in participants. Group sizes typically vary from 12 to 40 individuals, and are often heterogeneous with regard to the different problems that bring the participants to the group (Santorelli, 2014). The course usually lasts eight weeks, with weekly 2.5-3.5 hour classes. In addition to this comes one all-day silent retreat during the sixth week of the program. The program includes the following meditation practices: body scan meditation, hatha yoga, sitting meditation (attention to the breath, body, feelings, thoughts and emotions), walking meditation, and deliberate awareness of routine daily activities such as eating. The participants are required to practice these exercises at home 6 days per week for 45-60 minutes per day (Santorelli, 2014). According to Santorelli (2014), MBSR aims to give instructions tailored for the individual, that are experiential, explorative and interactive, of short duration, yet that provide life-long learning, and that are "highly challenging and strongly supportive" (p. 4).

The Standards of Practice also states that: "Great care should be exercised to introduce and discuss both the formal and informal aspects of mindfulness meditation practice free of the language, belief systems, dogma, and cultural contexts in which they originated" (Santorelli, 2014, p. 8). The ethical implications of these guidelines will be an important focus for our discussion in a later chapter.

2.3 Content, Practical Exercises and Attitudes

Each week focuses on a new curriculum theme for exploration in meditation and discussion in the group, and new mindfulness exercises are gradually added. In the first week, participants are introduced to the idea that "there is more right with you than wrong with you" (Blacker & Kabat-Zinn, 2009, p. 2), and that challenges and difficulties are possible to work through. During the first session, the participants are introduced to three basic mindfulness practices: mindful eating, mindfulness of breathing, and the body-scan, as well as to basic standing yoga poses. Mindful eating is introduced by investigating and eating a single raisin deliberatively and slowly, with keen attention to the sensory experience from all the senses; sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. This exercise particularly encourages the attitude of *beginner's mind* (the attitudes of MBSR will be explained below) (Blacker & Kabat-Zinn, 2009). Mindfulness of breathing is an exercise in which the participant sits or lies quietly and observes the abdomen rising and falling with each inhalation and exhalation. The attitudes of *non-judging* and *patience* are especially emphasised as the participant keeps bringing attention back to the breath every time it inevitably wanders. The body-scan is an exercise in which the participant systematically moves the attention through the various parts of the body, feeling the different sensations with an attitude of *acceptance*. The participants are given a recording of a guided body-scan meditation that they practice at home daily for the first two weeks (Blacker & Kabat-Zinn, 2009).

In class two the focus is on perception and creative responding. The theme for the week is the idea that how you perceive things control your response. The exercises taught in the first session; mindfulness of breathing and the body-scan, are refined through group discussion, further instruction and practice (Blacker & Kabat-Zinn, 2009).

Class three focuses on the pleasure of being present. Investigating how things are in the body and mind is done through yoga and meditation. Participants are also made aware of

the mind's tendency to label events in the moment as either something positive or negative, and how we respond to this by either pushing them away or clinging to them. Self-narratives and fixed ideas about the nature of reality that are experienced are questioned (Blacker & Kabat-Zinn, 2009).

This idea is continued in week four, where participants are encouraged to observe how conditioning is shaping our experiences. The class focuses on how a mindful exploration of experiences, characterized by curiosity and openness, can be a new way of relating to stressful events. The yoga section of the fourth session places emphasis on working with painful physical sensations (Blacker & Kabat-Zinn, 2009). It is pointed out how pain is usually reacted to by avoidance or with thoughts of rejection. In this exercise, the attitude of *letting go* is focused on, and the participants are encouraged to stay with the full range of experience, and to let go of the tendency to try to maximize the pleasant experiences and minimize the unpleasant (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). In the week leading up to the fourth session, the participants have been filling out an *unpleasant event calendar* in which they have described one unpleasant event they experienced each day. These experiences are investigated in the fourth session with focus on the mind/body connection and on the attributes that caused the experience to be labelled as unpleasant.

Class five focuses on conditioned patterns of avoidance of life difficulty, as well as emotional responsiveness and reactiveness. Sitting meditation exercises that focus on attention to thoughts and emotions as events in consciousness are introduced; for example observing the thoughts as merely thoughts, without getting carried away by the content. An exercise called *choiceless awareness meditation* is also taught in this session (Blacker & Kabat-Zinn, 2009). This is a practice in which the participant remains aware of whatever comes up, without directing attention to anything in particular. The participant is simply

receptive to whatever unfolds in the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). In this exercise the attitudes of *trust* and *non-striving* are particularly emphasised (Blacker & Kabat-Zinn, 2009).

Session six focuses on awareness of communication and interpersonal mindfulness, as well as on how to cope with stressful experiences. Various exercises that aim to develop awareness of verbal and non-verbal communication are practiced (Blacker & Kabat-Zinn, 2009).

After the sixth week follows an all-day silent mindfulness retreat where the exercises taught throughout the course are practiced intensively. Loving-kindness meditation is also taught at the retreat, a meditation that aims to cultivate feelings of warmth and compassion for oneself and others (Blacker & Kabat-Zinn, 2009). The impermanent nature of both physical and mental states are also explored, with the aim of fostering greater self-knowledge and insight (McCown, Reibel, & Micozzi, 2010).

The theme of class seven is to develop greater kindness for oneself and others (McCown et al., 2010) and the integration of the mindfulness practice into daily life. Reflections around life-style choices are encouraged. The last week of home practice the participants rely on their own guidance without using the recordings. They are also encouraged to trust their own judgement in choice of exercises (Blacker & Kabat-Zinn, 2009).

The last session are used for review and for answering lingering questions or concerns. The theme of the session is: “The eighth week is the rest of your life” (McCown et al., 2010, p. 141), and the group explores how to keep up the momentum and discipline that has been built up during the course of the program (Blacker & Kabat-Zinn, 2009).

2.3.1 The attitudes of MBSR. According to Kabat-Zinn (1990) the attitude that practice is met with, is of great importance for the cultivation of mindfulness. The MBSR Standards of Practice state that the cultivation of mindfulness is based on a specific set of attitudinal qualities (Santorelli, 2014). The promotion of these qualities should therefore be

central in any teaching of MBSR. Santorelli (2014) notes that these attitudes should not be introduced as concepts that participants *should* or *must* inhabit, but rather be cultivated experientially and gradually embodied through mindfulness practice. Seven attitudes constitute the foundation of mindfulness as taught in MBSR. These are: non-judging, patience, a beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go. According to Kabat-Zinn (1990), these attitudes are interdependent of each other, and should be cultivated consciously in the mindfulness practice.

According to Kabat-Zinn (1990) *non-judging* is to meet one's own experiences as an impartial witness, becoming aware of and stopping the constant stream of judgement arising to both external and internal events. While some things, people, or events are labelled as something good, others are judged as bad (Stahl & Goldstein, 2010). According to Kabat-Zinn (1990) these judgements can dominate the mind, making it hard to calm down, and find peace. Liberating oneself from the prejudice of the mind might therefore make it possible to handle life stress in alternative, and perhaps more constructive manners.

The attitude of *patience*, in MBSR, reflects an understanding and acceptance for the fact that we need to let some things unfold in their own time. Specifically, this means that a certain degree of patience toward the processes going on in body and mind is promoted in MBSR. To be patient is to be open to the moment, and everything happening within it (Santorelli, 2014).

By *beginner's mind*, the MBSR curriculum refers to relating to things around us as we are seeing them for the first time, not letting our beliefs about what we think we know about these things get in the way of our perception (Stahl & Goldstein, 2010). According to Kabat-Zinn (1990) we often make the mistake of letting our preconceptions about things get in the way of seeing the extraordinariness of the ordinary, and the richness of every present moment.

This attitude prevents us from getting stuck in our old ways, not seeing the new possibilities that are there.

The fourth attitude integral to mindfulness practice in MBSR is *trust*. According to Kabat-Zinn (1990) it is important to have a sense of trust in yourself and your own basic wisdom, rather than having to look to someone else for guidance. The MBSR curriculum emphasises that the practice of mindfulness is about understanding what it means to be yourself, and that imitating someone else therefore is pointless.

The fifth foundational attitude in MBSR is *non-striving* – the concept of having no goal in your meditation other than being in the present moment (Stahl & Goldstein, 2010). Kabat-Zinn (1990) notes that this sounds paradoxical, as presumably everybody has a goal in participating in an MBSR course. However, the best way of achieving goals in the practice of mindfulness is to let go of the striving for results. Change will then happen by itself (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

Acceptance in MBSR means the ability see things as they are in the present moment, without imposing ideas of how we want them to be (Santorelli, 2014). According to Kabat-Zinn (1990) this should not be taken as an argument for resignation in the face of injustice, or an abandonment of principles and values. Rather, it should be understood as a willingness to see things clearly, as they actually are. In doing this you will, from an MBSR perspective, have a better chance of also acting appropriately (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

Letting go, or non-attachment, is the last of the seven fundamental attitudes taught in the MBSR curriculum, and according to Kabat-Zinn (1990) fundamental to mindfulness practice. He argues that the mind wants to hold on to certain thoughts, feelings, or events, whereas others we try to rid ourselves of as quick as possible. In practicing mindfulness, these impulses should be put aside, and instead the participant observe each thought, feeling, or event as they unfold, without trying to grasp them or push them away (Santorelli, 2014).

2.4 The Process of Change in MBSR

Even though the MBSR-courses usually only lasts for eight weeks, Kabat-Zinn (1990) points out that the practice of mindfulness is a life-long endeavour. The MBSR-course aims to plant the attitudinal seeds that permit the practice and the processes of change to continue also after the course is finished. About the process of healing Kabat-Zinn wrote: "We often see that healing takes place on its own over time as we align ourselves with what is deepest and best in ourselves and rest in awareness moment by moment without an attachment to outcome" (Kabat-Zinn, 2013a, p. 292). This alignment is made possible by practices that allow the mind to settle in a state in which it does not hold on or reject anything (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Kabat-Zinn (1990) describes that in such states feelings of isolation and fragmentation can be replaced by feelings of wholeness and interconnectedness, and that the openness of the still mind allow the patients to view their problems and difficulties in a different way. These calm yet focused states of mind are cultivated through mindfulness-practices such as for example mindfulness of the breathing (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

Kabat-Zinn (1990) points out that MBSR is more about healing than about curing. Whereas curing a disease is focused on removing the disease itself, healing is focused on changing the relationship one has to the disease or problem. "Healing always involves an attitudinal and emotional transformation" (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p. 168). Kabat-Zinn explains that the process of healing is when the patient is "undergoing a profound transformation of view" (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p. 168), and he defines healing as "a coming to terms with things as they are" (Kabat-Zinn, 2013b, p. 292). Kabat-Zinn (1990) argues that growth and healing come about as a result of an increased acceptance of past or present conditions, for example one's own history and family background, or of the ways of nature, for example old age, sickness and death. He further states that dedicated cultivation of mindfulness gives rise to

insights into the mind and into the ways of nature, and that such insights are crucial in facilitating acceptance (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

In this chapter we have discussed core structure and principles in an MBSR course, as presented in different textual material describing it. We have described the content and exercises that are used and we have presented conceptualisations regarding how it is believed that these practices bring about the changes typically seen in patients undergoing MBSR-training. To better understand the framework in which mindfulness exist in Buddhism we will now turn to the origin of the mindfulness practices, and discuss the Buddhist perspective on how mindfulness leads to mental well-being.

3. The Buddhist Framework

Buddhism has become increasingly popular in mainstream culture in western countries (Skilton, 2014), and more recently also within medical and psychiatric healthcare. While previously regarded as an exotic oriental religion, many are now looking to Buddhism for its psychology and for its perspectives regarding the training of the mind (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006; Walsh & Shapiro, 2006). As seen in the previous chapter, Kabat-Zinn (1990) states that Mindfulness as practiced in MBSR, was developed in Buddhist traditions. Teasdale and Chaskalson (2013a) have argued that an understanding of the Buddhist framework on which MBSR is built has proven useful for instructors. In what context does mindfulness exist within Buddhism, and how is the practice of mindfulness understood within this context? Does Buddhism offer a psychology in the western scientific understanding of the term? How can the Buddhist tradition contribute to the contemporary understanding of mindfulness and the mind?

This chapter will explore the core teachings in Buddhism, primarily by making use of the early Buddhist texts. We will discuss the Four Noble Truths, the central teaching of Buddhism, and the Threefold Training that springs out of it. The last section of the Threefold

Training, the development of wisdom, contains insight meditations on what in Buddhism is called universal characteristics of existence, which will be explained in depth towards the end of the chapter. We will also discuss what these teachings say about the process of change, and about what elements of practice that are considered essential. This discussion will provide an understanding of the framework that underlies the mindfulness practices, which will be valuable for the deeper analysis of MBSR in the next chapter. Further, it will elucidate the mechanisms by which mindfulness can lead to increased wellbeing, and the functions of its auxiliary elements, particularly morality and wisdom.

Buddhism is often regarded as one of the world religions, with around 500 million adherents, mainly from eastern and south-eastern Asian countries. It originates from the teachings of the Buddha, a man who according to historical research is assumed to have lived in Northern India between the mid-6th and the mid-4th centuries BC (*The new encyclopædia Britannica*, 2010). As Buddhism spread throughout the Asian continent it divided into two main schools: Theravāda (today the dominant form of Buddhism in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Burma) and Mahāyāna (found in China, Tibet, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Nepal and Vietnam) (*The new encyclopædia Britannica*, 2010). The teachings of the Buddha was collected in a council held shortly after his death, and transmitted through oral recitation until they were written down in the last century BCE in a collection referred to as the Tipiṭaka. There are several versions of the Tipiṭaka, and although they are slightly different in both content and organisation, they share a common core, most centrally, the teachings on the Four Noble Truths, the Threefold Training, and the three characteristics of existence (Bodhi, 2005).

Buddha is not a name, but a title that means *the awakened one*. The Buddha's actual name was Siddhattha Gotama (Sanskrit: Siddhartha Gautama) and he was born into a high caste in Kapilavatthu that is located in present-day Nepal. The Buddhist literature describes

that in the early parts of his life he lived a privileged life devoted to sensual pleasures. At age 29 he became disenchanted with that way of life after contemplating old age, sickness, and death, and left his home and renounced his caste, in order to seek higher spiritual truths about human discontent and freedom from that. He followed several of the most renowned teachers of the time, but concluded eventually that their teachings were not satisfactory. He then decided to go his own way, and according to the Buddhist scriptures he found a way to eradicate discontent and suffering from his mind through meditative insight practices. This is what is referred to as enlightenment or awakening in Buddhism. The remainder of his life he spent teaching the way he had found (Rahula, 1959).

3.1 The Four Noble Truths – The Core Teaching of Buddhism

According to the Buddhist canonical scriptures, the first teaching the Buddha gave was a summary of the insights that had lead to his awakening (SN 56:11) (excerpts from this discourse can be found in Appendix B). This framework known as the Four Noble Truths is regarded as the core of Buddhism, and important for understanding the processes of change. The centrality of the Four Noble Truths are underscored in the early texts that maintain that all the different teachings the Buddha gave are subsumed under these Four Noble Truths:

> . . . the things I have directly known but have not taught you are numerous, while the things I have taught you are few. And why, bhikkhus [monks], have I not taught those many things? Because they are unbeneficial, irrelevant to the fundamentals of the holy life, and do not lead to revulsion, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna. Therefore I have not taught them.
>
> And what, bhikkhus, have I taught? I have taught: 'This is suffering'; I have taught: 'This is the origin of suffering'; I have taught: 'This is the cessation of suffering'; I have taught: 'This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.' And why,

> bhikkhus, have I taught this? Because this is beneficial, relevant to the fundamentals of the holy life, and leads to (…) Nibbāna. Therefore I have taught this. (SN 56:31)

In this quote, the Buddha as depicted in the early canonical texts had a very specific aim with his teachings, and he refrained from discussing issues that were irrelevant to that aim (see also MN 22; MN 28). The four themes the Buddha mentions in this quote; suffering, the origin, the cessation, and the way, are summary statements referring to the Four Noble Truths. Contemporary Buddhist monks emphasise that these "truths" are not to be regarded as absolute truth or dogma, but rather as themes one is encouraged to scrutinize and reflect upon (Sumedho, 1992). The Buddhist aim is to realize the deeper truth of nature, not to prove that the Buddhist doctrine as presently taught is correct. For this reason some prefer to call them the Four Ennobling Truths (Teasdale & Chaskalson, 2013a). This attitude is further illustrated by the late meditation master Ajahn Maha Boowa who frequently said that the meditator's focus should not be on trying to prove the Buddha right, but that he rather should try to prove him wrong, because that is the only way to reliable truth (Ṭhānissaro, 2006). This attitude is in harmony with the scientific method, and the principle of falsification in particular (*The new encyclopædia Britannica*, 2010). The Four Noble Truths of Buddhism are structured in the following way:

1. Describing the fundamental problem
2. Identifying the cause of that problem
3. Pointing out the mechanism by which the cause can be removed
4. Mapping out the steps that have to be taken for this removal to occur

There is a functional resemblance between this framework and the framework of modern medicine and psychiatry; the first truth is the diagnosis, the second is the aetiology, the third is the mechanism of healing, and the forth is the treatment plan (Gethin, 1998).

3.1.1 The Problem: Dukkha (Suffering, Discontent). The First Noble Truth deals with the fundamental problem that all living beings experience. In the Buddhist scriptures the Buddha describes this problem by the Pāli-word dukkha. This word is translated as suffering, discontentment or stress (Bodhi, 1994; Sumedho, 1992; Ṭhānissaro, 1999). There is no adequate equivalent to the concept of dukkha in the English language, as dukkha includes all uncomfortable subjective experiences, ranging from mild irritations or feeling of incompleteness, up to the most intense feelings of suffering (Rahula, 1959). In his first sermon the Buddha described dukkha in the following way: "…birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering…" (SN 56:11).

Many have regarded Buddhism as a pessimistic philosophy because of this teaching, while others argue that it is not pessimistic, but rather realistic (Rahula, 1959). It could also be argued that Buddhism is optimistic because it offers a way to overcome dukkha. In the Tipiṭaka the Buddha claimed that the liberation from dukkha can come about because there are two parts to dukkha, a bodily part and a mental part. The bodily (or external/sensory) part there is not much that can be done about, a toothache will always be painful, but it is the mental part that is the key aspect of the problem. Painful sensations become suffering when one react to them with worry, anger, hatred and so on. According to the Buddha, the mental part of dukkha is something one can train one's mind to overcome. He claimed that it is possible, through proper understanding, to feel these painful feelings, but in a detached way, without any mental anguish (SN 36:6).

According to the Pāli Canon, in the First Noble Truth the Buddha stated that in order to arrive at that point, one would need to fully understand dukkha (SN 56:11). Sumedho (1992) elaborates on this statement and explains that in order to understand dukkha one would

have to stop running away from it or continuously trying to avoid it. He emphasises that the practitioner should investigate the dukkha that arises in daily life, in whatever form it takes, whether it is slight or extreme. Staying with unpleasant feelings requires mindfulness and effort, because the tendency to distract oneself by continually doing things, or by seeking out ways to stimulate one's senses, might have become an ingrained habit.

Bodhi (1998, 2001) argue that understanding Buddhist cosmology and world-view is important for understanding the concept of dukkha. The Pāli Canon portray the Buddha as saying that on the night of his enlightenment, based on the power of the deep states of meditation called the jhānas (these states will be further elaborated on below) he was able to recollect many of his own past lives. He claimed to see directly that the conditions in which one is reborn is determined by the ethical quality of one's actions and mental state (MN 36). This is called the law of kamma (Sanskrit: karma), which is not a law imposed externally by a god or deity (Ṭhānissaro, 2002), but a law of nature (AN 42:6). In these scriptures, the Buddha further claimed that the cycle of rebirth has no discoverable beginning and that the endless wandering from life to life inherently is dukkha, i.e. it will never lead to lasting peace and satisfaction (SN 15:1; SN 12:44). Rebirth is linked with the Four Noble Truths in that dukkha has the same cause as the continued cycle of birth and death. Thus when the practice culminates with the letting go of taṇhā (the direct cause of dukkha, will be explained below) and dukkha, the fuel that leads the mind to seek rebirth is exhausted, and the cycle has been brought to cessation (AN 4:1). This culmination is what is referred to as enlightenment, awakening, or Nibbāna (Sanskrit: Nirvana). The enlightened person lives out the remainder of his life, but upon the death of the body, the mind enters Parinibbāna (Iti 44), a state of which the Buddha said very little (SN 38:1; SN 43:1-44; Ud 8:1; Ud 8:3). There are different opinions about whether Parinibbāna is some kind of reality, or simply a term for the cessation of all (Brahmavamso, n.d.; Ṭhānissaro, 1993).

Several western Buddhist teachers have argued that rebirth has no direct connection to the core Buddhist teachings, that it is no more than Asian cultural baggage that should be left behind when teaching Buddhism in the West (e.g. Batchelor, 1997). Fronsdal (n.d.) maintains that the oldest portions of the canonical texts (the Aṭṭhakavagga of the Suttanipāta) does not contain references to rebirth, and suggests that the question of rebirth is unessential for Buddhist practice. He recommends that unless one knows the truth about what happens upon death, the most sensible attitude is that of open-minded agnosticism. Bodhi (1998), the translator of the modern version of the Tipiṭaka, contends these claims, and states that on account of the canonical texts there is no doubt that the doctrine of rebirth is central to the teachings of the Buddha. He maintains that the worldview of endless birth and death is a requirement for the full understanding of the First Noble Truth, and that the aim of the Buddhist practice is liberation from the cycle of rebirth (Bodhi, 2001). This is an on-going discussion among Buddhist scholars, which is beyond the scope of this text.

Regardless of the stand one takes on rebirth, there is a consensus among these (Buddhist) authors that Nibbāna is to be achieved while one is still living, that dukkha has to be understood, and that this understanding comes about by investigating dukkha as it arises in our daily lives (Batchelor, 1997; Bodhi, 1994; Fronsdal, 2006). For these reasons, one's stand on rebirth has small implications for how the practice is carried out, and the Four Noble Truths apply to all the dukkha of daily life. This is underscored in a phrase often used by the Buddha in which he says that the hallmarks of his teaching is that it is to be seen here and now, that it is timeless, that one is invited to inspect, explore and criticize it, that it is practical and applicable, and that it is to be personally experienced by the wise (AN 3:70).

In summary, the First Noble Truth of Buddhism states that the most fundamental problem of every living being is dukkha—discontentment and suffering. It further claims that fully understanding dukkha is necessary to attain liberation from it.

3.1.2 The Cause: Taṇhā (Craving/Desire). While dukkha partly has external causes, the focus in Buddhist meditation practice is on the causes existing within one's own mind. In the Buddhist scriptures the Buddha explains the Second Noble Truth by stating that the necessary cause of dukkha is taṇhā (SN 56:11). This is another term that is difficult to translate. The literal meaning is thirst, but it is most often translated as craving (Nyanatiloka & Nyanaponika, 1980). The Buddha encouraged his disciples to scrutinize dukkha whenever it arises, and to notice how it is invariably bound up with taṇhā (SN 56:11). Sumedho (1992) points out that human beings have a basic desire for happiness and employ different strategies for trying to find happiness in their lives, through food, family, entertainment, travelling and so on. Common to most of these strategies is that they involve taṇhā. He describes how one might feel that if only one could get certain things the way one wants, or get rid of some annoying elements in one's life, then one could be happy. Sumedho thus points out that the Buddha claims that what people often assume is the way to achieve happiness (i.e. by following taṇhā), actually is the direct cause of discontentment and unhappiness. Ṭhānissaro (1999) explains that the problem with taṇhā is that it represents an unquenchable type of thirst. He says that although taṇhā might seem to promise satisfaction and a feeling of fullness, it does not take long before taṇhā arises again, threatening with unhappiness, loneliness, or other unpleasant feelings unless obeyed. Sumedho (1992) warns against the misunderstanding that taṇhā includes all kinds of wanting and desire. Taṇhā refers more specifically to the grasping of desire due to identification. He stresses the point that many kinds of desire are necessary and good, and that without them one would be unable to function or to do good things in the world.

The Buddha explained that taṇhā is of three kinds: The craving for sensual pleasures, the craving to be or become, and the craving not to be (SN 56:11). Sumedho (1992) describes the craving for sensual pleasures as the desire to add something to one's experience that one

feels is lacking, or to escape from unpleasant experiences that one feels is preventing a feeling of satisfaction. The craving to be or become he illustrates with the desire to become something else than what one is and the craving not to be he describes as the wanting to get rid of things, for example a certain personality trait. He concludes that taṇhā is a form of non-acceptance of the way things are, here and now.

3.1.3 The Cessation: Letting Go of Taṇhā. The third truth in the Buddhist teachings is about the cessation of dukkha. The Buddha stated that if taṇhā is not present in the mind, there will not be any dukkha either. The way of happiness he had discovered came about through the abandoning of taṇhā (SN 56:11). He argued that taṇhā is a necessary condition for dukkha to occur. Sumedho (1992) suggests that in the third truth the Buddha provides valuable hints on how the abandonment of taṇhā comes about, a point that is often misunderstood. Taṇhā is not something one is to forcefully drive out of one's life, but rather something that one lets go of, gives up, and relinquishes. He explains that the Buddha points to the difference between these approaches when he said that letting go is something that has to be realized; it has to be discovered (SN 56:11). Sumedho (1992) argue that a realization is an understanding that comes about through discovery, through insight. The insight that leads the mind to naturally let go of taṇhā is the clear seeing that taṇhā is the cause of the problem, not the solution (as one might usually think). When such a shift in one's view occurs, a corresponding shift in how one relates to things and behaves follows as a result; disenchantment with things or actions one formerly took to be sources of lasting happiness arise. This is how taṇhā is let go of, not through force and will power, but through understanding and insight (AN 11:2).

The classical story about the monkey trap (e.g. Shah, 1969, see also MN 66, Dhp 345-347) is illustrative of the inherent difficulty in the process of letting go. A clever method for catching monkeys involves putting a fruit inside a coconut shell fastened to a tree. The

coconut has a drilled hole in it that is big enough for the monkey to put its hand into, but too small for the monkey to be able to withdraw its clenched fist. In that way, when the monkey grasps the fruit inside the coconut it is stuck. Apparently the monkey is unwilling to let go of his desire for the fruit to such an extent that the hunters can approach and capture it. This story illustrates the point made by Sumedho (1992) above; the desire itself is not the problem, but the grasping of that desire, the inability to let go of it. In the context of this example it is also clear how acceptance is related to letting go. When the monkey accepts the reality of the situation, that the drawback inherent in his desire is greater than the reward, letting go follows naturally. It accepts that things are the way they are, and gives up on the clinging to the desire that they were otherwise.

The attitude to desire and striving in the Buddhist texts might seem paradoxical, on one hand they encourage striving for the attainment of enlightenment, and on the other hand they state that the cause of the problem is the very striving itself. Ṭhānissaro (2008) explains that this apparent paradox can be resolved by understanding that desire is an indispensable component for initiating and sustaining the cultivation of the mind, but that the desire at the same time can be an obstacle to the progression. This paradoxical dynamic is arguably the reason why many teachers encourage non-striving (Suzuki & Dixon, 2010), practicing without the desire to achieve anything, (Chah, 1985), or to practice just for the sake of practice (Liem Thitadhammo, 2013). It is pointed out that the practitioner's efforts should be directed towards the causes (the maintaining of mindfulness) rather than on the results (the attainments), in the same way as when a gardener is growing a tree he waters and fertilises the sapling, provide it with adequate sunlight, and keeps bugs off it. He does not try to stretch the plant in order for it to grow faster. The gardener knows that the tree will grow according to its own nature. If he tries to rush it he might end up drowning it (Brahm, 2006).

3.1.4 The Path to the Cessation of the Cause. The main focus in the Buddhist quest for the cessation of suffering is through the development of the mind:

> Bhikkhus [monks], I do not see even one other thing that, when undeveloped and uncultivated, brings such suffering as the mind. The mind, when undeveloped and uncultivated, brings suffering.
>
> Bhikkhus, I do not see even one other thing that, when developed and cultivated, brings such happiness as the mind. The mind, when developed and cultivated, brings happiness. (AN 1:29-30)

The Fourth Noble Truth in Buddhism describes the gradual practice for the development and the cultivation of the mind that culminates in the letting go of taṇhā, and as a consequence, the letting go of dukkha. This path of practice is called the Noble Eightfold Path, and consists of; (1) right view, (2) right intention, (3) right action, (4) right speech, (5) right livelihood, (6) right effort, (7) right mindfulness, and (8) right concentration (samādhi) (SN 56:11). These are not eight steps to be practiced one by one, but eight qualities which when brought together enables the mind to transcend dukkha (MN 117). The factors from the Eightfold Path are also commonly organised in what is called the Threefold Training (see table 1), although the order of the factors are different. The ordering of the factors in the Eightfold Path emphasises the perspective that right view is needed in a certain extent in order to engage in moral behaviour (MN 117). The ordering of the Threefold Training however – morality, meditation, and wisdom – emphasises the perspective of practice; morality forms the fundament for meditation which in turn enables the mind to achieve insights and wisdom (AN 3:89; MN 44.11; AN 11:2). In our discussion of the Fourth Noble Truth we will use the framework of the Threefold Training as its broader categories make the later comparison to MBSR clearer.

3.2 The Threefold Training

3.2.1 Morality / virtue (sīla). The starting point of the Buddhist practice is the development of morality or virtue. It can be considered the fundament on which the rest of the mindfulness practice in the Buddhist tradition is built on (MN 107), and its cultivation is twofold; (1) abstention from wrongdoing and (2) development of goodness. When referring to the former *morality* is the preferred translation, and when referring to the latter *virtue* is the better translation (Bodhi, 1994). Morality and virtue is viewed as interrelated, and even though the practice of morality is formulated as a set of precepts, it is seen as guided by compassion for others and self, rather than by an external enforcer or ideals (Amaro, 2015). A passage in the canonical scriptures elucidate the guiding principle that differentiate between encouraged and not encouraged actions in Buddhism:

> When you reflect, if you know: 'This action that I wish to do with the body would lead to my own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both; it is an unwholesome bodily action with painful consequences, with painful results,' then you definitely should not do such an action with the body. But when you reflect, if you know: 'This action that I wish to do with the body would not lead to my own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both; it is a wholesome bodily action with pleasant consequences, with pleasant results,' then you may do such an action with the body. (MN 61)

In the same sutta, the above passage is repeated in the same way for verbal and mental actions. The passage demonstrates the pragmatic approach for giving guidance regarding behaviour in the Buddhist traditions. Whether a planned behaviour should be engaged in or not depends on the outcome, and should be considered in advance. Rather that giving detailed guidelines for right and wrongs, general principles for making moral decisions are provided. It is worth noting that although the anticipated outcome of an action is used as a guideline for

whether an action is encouraged or not, it is not the outcome of an action that decides whether an action is regarded as wholesome or unwholesome, but rather the person's intention. If one performs an action, intending that it will lead to pleasant or beneficial consequences, it is considered wholesome, regardless of whether the action turn out to have such consequences or not (AN 6:63).

Abstention from wrongdoing is reflected in *the five precepts*, which are basic moral guidelines that the Buddha recommended for lay practitioners; abstaining from intentionally killing living beings; abstaining from stealing; abstaining from sexual misconduct; abstaining from lying; and abstaining from drugs and alcohol (AN 8:39). The positive counterparts of the first four of these are; the development of kindness and compassion for living beings; generosity and respect for the belongings of others; fidelity; and gentle, honest speech that promote concord and growth (AN 10:176; Bodhi, 1994). The fifth precept (abstaining from drugs and alcohol) is in some instances omitted in the scriptures when the Buddha explained morality. This is the case in the just cited discourse, which is the reason only four counterparts are listed.

The development of goodness is done both behaviourally, such as practicing generosity, and through systematic cultivation of wholesome mental states such as compassion and loving-kindness (AN 11:12; SN 46:54). It is worth noting that the Buddhist scriptures emphasise that all behaviour, wholesome or unwholesome, originate from the mind, and that the degree of wholesomeness in a person's intentions are decisive for the ethical value of his or her actions:

> Phenomena are preceded by the heart,
>
> ruled by the heart,
>
> made of the heart.
>
> If you speak or act

with a corrupted heart,

then suffering follows you —

as the wheel of the cart,

the track of the ox

that pulls it.

Phenomena are preceded by the heart,

ruled by the heart,

made of the heart.

If you speak or act

with a calm, bright heart,

then happiness follows you,

like a shadow

that never leaves. (DhpT 1-2)

The verses above also further illustrate how closely the ethical value of a person's intentions are linked to mental wellbeing or suffering in the Buddhist understanding. Engaging in wholesome actions is thought to lead to happiness, while engaging in unwholesome behaviours is expected to result in discontent and distress.

Amaro (2015) also emphasise that the Buddhist approach to morality is pragmatic rather than dogmatic and idealistic. The Pāli word for precept–sikkhāpada–literally means *method of training*. When a person commits to the five Buddhist precepts he traditionally recite a phrase that can be translated as for example: "I undertake the method of training of refraining from intentionally taking the life of any living being". Amaro (2015) points out that westerners might be influenced, directly or indirectly, by the Judeo-Christian view of rights and wrongs as absolutes, and may mistakenly understand the Buddhist precepts in that light.

Pertaining to the development of mindfulness, the essential function of morality and virtue is to provide the mind with the feeling of goodness that comes from lack of remorse. This enables the mind to settle down in a mindful and joyful state, and provides the emotional robustness to deal with the sometimes upsetting and challenging insights that might arise (AN 11:2; AN 3:70; MN 39).

One aspect of morality that is not explicitly mentioned in the Eightfold Path, but which the Buddha introduced in his first discourse before explaining the Four Noble Truths, is that of sense-restraint (SN 56:11). In that sermon the Buddha pointed out that the way to the liberation from dukkha is *the middle way*, the path that avoids both extremes of sensual indulgence and self-mortification (a practice common at the time). The Buddha stressed that the pursuit of gratification through the senses is an obstacle to achieve the deep meditative states (MN 107; SN 46:55), and this is reflected in the additional precepts that are commonly taken by lay-people when they come to stay in the monastery for shorter periods of time. These additional precepts recommend the abstention from sexuality, entertainment, and beautification, as well as moderation in eating and sleeping (AN 8:43).

In the Canon the Buddha did not dismiss that sensual pleasures are gratifying, but he pointed out that there are many inherent drawbacks in the pursuit of happiness through sensual stimulation (MN 13). He advocated for the restraint of the senses, not because he viewed the sensual experience as problematic in and of itself (AN 6:63), but because the renunciation of sensual pleasures allows for the development of an even greater and more beneficial kind of happiness found in the deep meditative states (MN 59).

3.2.2 Meditation/concentration (samādhi). The second major part of Buddhist practice is the development of samādhi. Samādhi is often translated as concentration or meditation, but the former is too narrow and the latter too wide to capture the meaning of the word. Samādhi refers to a state of mind characterised by deep calm, heightened clarity, and an

almost effortless sustained attention. One-pointedness and unification of mind (regarding subject and object) is also features of samādhi that becomes prominent in the higher stages of meditation called jhāna (AN 5:28). The development of samādhi is given copious attention in the Buddhist Canon, and there are numerous methods explained that give rise to the same states (i.e. the jhānas). Examples of these methods are mindfulness of breathing (MN 118), mindfulness of the body (MN 119), recollection of virtue or generosity (AN 11:12), and meditations on loving-kindness (AN 8:63). It is worth noting that in Buddhism it is recognised that practitioners have differing personalities, needs, and aptitudes, and hence there are different modes of practices that are considered optimal for different kinds of people (Vism III:74-102).

According to the Buddhist scriptures, the development of samādhi is done through the training of mindfulness. This is done by following the framework of the four foundations of mindfulness as found in the frequently quoted Satipaṭṭhāna sutta (MN 10). In that sutta the Buddha referred to the four foundations of mindfulness as the direct path to awakening and transcendence of dukkha. The first foundation of mindfulness is described in the following way: “a bhikkhu [monk] abides contemplating the body as a body, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world.” (MN 10.3). The other three foundations of mindfulness are feelings, mind, and mind objects. The general description on how they are practiced is identical as for the body, except that “body as a body” is replaced with “feelings as feelings”, “mind as mind”, and “mind-objects as mind-objects”. The sutta also contains more detailed and practical guidelines for each foundation. With regards to the body, several contemplations that has already been mentioned are recommended; e.g. mindfulness of breathing and contemplation of the bodily parts. In the contemplation of feelings the meditator is recommended to keep the attention on the feeling tone, noticing whether he feels pleasant, neutral, or painful feelings. When contemplating the mind he is

encouraged to note how the mind is affected by certain states; e.g. lust, hate, delusion, distractedness, contractedness, and how the mind is when it is unaffected by these states. The contemplations of mind-objects are described as the contemplations such as on the six sense bases, or on the Four Noble Truths. Each of the practices listed in the Satipaṭṭhāna sutta is followed by a section devoted to how insight is developed, which suggests is done by turning the attention to the aspect of impermanence related to the theme of the practiced contemplation (e.g. the breathing process) (MN 10).

The scriptures explain that as mindfulness gets stronger and consistent the mind will temporarily overcome the hindrances to peace and clarity; sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt (MN 39), and depending on the type of contemplation the meditator is engaged in (Vism III:106-107), the mind may enter into the states of jhāna. These are four successive states of ever-greater stillness and strength of mindfulness. When the mind emerges from jhāna the scriptures describe that it is pliant, steady, and imperturbable (MN 39).

The Buddhist texts state that the contribution that samādhi provide to the practice is clarity, focus, and consistency of observation. These qualities of mind are essential for insights into the workings of the mind to arise. When the practitioner observes the mind with an untrained attention it might appear blurry and chaotic, but when the power of observation has been trained patterns and connections might become apparent, and insight into the nature of reality may arise (SN 46:55; AN 3:100).

3.2.3 Wisdom (paññā). The Buddhist scriptures emphasise that even though mindfulness reach the pinnacle of purity in the fourth jhāna, the training in mindfulness does not culminate there. At this point, the meditator focuses this pure, sustained mindfulness on his own mental experiences and processes, and through continuous investigation of mental phenomena a better understanding of what things are and how they are connected can arise

(MN 39). The habitual ways of perceiving, feeling about, and reacting to things are viewed as grounded in the person's views about what things are and how they are connected. When these fundamental views change, the natural ways of perceiving, reacting, and feeling changes correspondingly (DN 1; MN 39). Wisdom can therefore be understood as a state that emerges due to replacement of distorted views with views that correspond more closely to reality.

What this wisdom or right view consists of is described from different angles in the Canon. It is often described as the clear understanding of the Four Noble Truths (MN 9; SN 45:8), and often as a clear understanding of the three universal characteristics: impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and non-self (e.g. SN 22:59). The reason wisdom is the key to the overcoming of dukkha is that what is seen is that the mind is craving for and clinging to phenomena that is inherently impermanent, unsatisfactory and not-self (these will be more fully explained below)

. The Pāli Canon points out that the strategy people have for seeking happiness (namely following taṇhā) is actually the source of our dukkha. When the meditator sees this clearly, it becomes natural for the mind to turn away from taṇhā; to let go of the things previously clung onto (AN 11:2). This is the culmination of the Buddhist practice called awakening or enlightenment (MN 22).

3.3 The Process of Change From a Buddhist Perspective

The Kimatthiyasutta gives a succinct account on how the Buddha viewed the process of change in Buddhist practice:

> Thus, Ānanda, the purpose and benefit of wholesome virtuous behavior is non-regret; the purpose and benefit of non-regret is joy; the purpose and benefit of joy is rapture; the purpose and benefit of rapture is tranquility; the purpose and benefit of tranquility is pleasure; the purpose and benefit of pleasure is concentration; the purpose and benefit of concentration is the knowledge and vision of things as they really are; the

> purpose and benefit of the knowledge and vision of things as they really are is disenchantment; the purpose and benefit of disenchantment is dispassion; and the purpose and benefit of dispassion is the knowledge and vision of liberation. Thus, Ānanda, wholesome virtuous behavior progressively leads to the foremost. (AN 11:1)

In this sutta, the Buddha is depicted as describing the process by which the practice he taught unfolds to Ānanda, one of his closest disciples. The teaching is summary, as much of the material in the Pāli Canon, but give valuable insight into how the Buddha envisioned the process of change and the mechanisms involved. The discourse parallels, as we shall see, the Threefold Training described above. The starting point of the process that the Buddha maps out is virtuous behaviour, and the function that it brings to the practice is the feeling of a clear conscience, and the joy that accompanies that feeling. This description might raise the question whether the Buddhist texts view past unwholesome behaviours as insurmountable obstacles to meditation. Several passages in the scriptures answers this questions and make it clear that as long as the practitioners has changed his ways, and that his morality is good in the present, the deeper stages of the practice will be attainable (AN 2:21; DN 2; MN 61; DhpB 173; Iti 2:31). In the Pāli Canon there is even a story about a reformed serial killer, Aṅgulimāla, who attained full enlightenment (MN 86; Th 866-891). These first links; wholesome virtuous behaviour, non-regret, and joy, can be argued to be corresponding to the training in sīla (morality/virtue) from the framework of the Threefold Training explained above.

From the joy arising from having abandoned unwholesome behaviours and having cultivated wholesome behaviours comes rapture. Rapture refers to an energetic and pleasant feeling that can occur in the mind during meditation (MN 118; Vism IV:94-99), and leads onwards to a deeper calm and an inner sense of pleasure. According to the Buddhist texts the combination of the uplifting energy of rapture, the calming factor of tranquillity and the well-

being that arises as a result enable the mind to absorb deeply into the object of meditation and enter the deep states of samādhi called jhāna (SN 54:13; Brahm, 2006; Buddhadasa, 1997). These links correspond to the training in samādhi of the Threefold Training.

The Kimatthiyasutta says that the purpose of these deep states of meditation is that it enables the mind to see and understand things as they really are, which leads onto the sequence of disenchantment, dispassion, and liberation. The seeing and understanding things as they really are, which sparks the process of letting go, refers specifically to seeing phenomena in light of the three universal characteristics as will be explained below. Disenchantment and dispassion refers to the natural turning away from taṇhā as mentioned above. Upon clearly seeing that not happiness (as formerly assumed), but dukkha is to be found in the direction of taṇhā, the mind naturally loses interest in following it. When the mind naturally shuns taṇhā, it is liberated from its grasp. The Buddha is here shown to claim that unenlightened people does not see things according to how they really are, a concept he called avijjā (usually translated as ignorance). The Buddhist texts identify avijjā as the root cause to dukkha (SN 12:2; SN 35:79), which underscores the importance placed on insight practices in the Buddhist meditative traditions.

In the Buddhist perspective it is assumed that all human beings seek happiness and freedom from suffering, and that behaviours are performed because people on some level think that it will make them happier or at least less miserable, either immediately or at a later point. Avijjā is the misguided idea about what leads to happiness and not. When a person is overcome by confusion and hatred he might think that killing or harming is going to make him happier, so he might do something that will haunt him for the rest of his life. Another person under the influence of greed might think that cheating on her husband will give her the passion and excitement she misses, and she might end up letting one night's pleasure seriously damage her relationship to her husband and children. The Buddha said that people

usually assume that following taṇhā is going to bring about peace and happiness (SN 36:6), and that this is the crux of avijjā. The kinds of misunderstandings (i.e. about the universal characteristics) that according to the Buddhist teachings make people make such mistaken choices in life are discussed in the next section.

In summary, within the perspective of Buddhist psychology, it is seen as critical to understand that avijjā and wrong views are at the heart of the problem in order to understand the process of meditation. Dukkha is caused by taṇhā, craving to get things, to get rid of things, or for things to remain the same. Taṇhā is not conquered by will power and suppression, but through seeing and understanding how things really are. Certain wrong views are fertile soil from which taṇhā can grow. When these views have been replaced by right views taṇhā finds no soil in which it can sprout, and disenchantment and dispassion towards phenomena that cannot provide contentment will arise naturally. In the following section we will explore the views the Buddha is referring to.

3.4 The Universal Characteristics

While human beings might have wrong views about many different things, the Buddha singled out a few crucial themes of exceptional importance. He called these the universal characteristics. Three verses attributed to the Buddha in the Dhammapāda introduce these three universal characteristics; impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and non-self:

> "All conditioned things are impermanent" — when one sees this with wisdom, one turns away from suffering. This is the path to purification.
>
> "All conditioned things are unsatisfactory" — when one sees this with wisdom, one turns away from suffering. This is the path to purification.
>
> "All things are not-self" — when one sees this with wisdom, one turns away from suffering. This is the path to purification. (DhpB 277-279)

According to the Buddhist texts these are characteristics common to all the things that one experiences, and to which all unenlightened beings hold wrong views (SN 25:1-10; Vism XXIII:4). These are ways in which nature behaves in discord to one's expectations, hopes, and desires. Views (diṭṭhi) in Buddhist psychology are not merely intellectual opinions, but core beliefs that influence thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and behaviours (Bodhi, 1993). One might grasp something intellectually without having come to terms with it in a deeper sense. Death is an example of this; people usually know intellectually that they are going to die, but might not have taken this on board to such a degree that they have come to terms with this fact, and accepted it on a deeper level.

The first of the three themes that the Buddha singled out is that of impermanence (anicca). The Buddha asserted that all conditioned things (i.e. all things that has come to be due to causes) are in constant flux, and that all will end sooner or later (SN 35:82). This might be easy to agree with on an intellectual level, but the Buddhist perspective holds that on a deeper level people expect things to last or to remain the same. In the scriptures the Buddha argued that impermanence and instability is a basic feature of nature itself, and that if one's views are in conflict with nature friction will arise (MN 22). When a person has expectations that some thing that she likes will stay the same forever, sadness, frustration, disappointment, and a host of similar feelings may arise when that thing changes or is destroyed. In the Buddhist perspective however, when a meditator has come to terms with nature the way it is, and accepted the truth of impermanence on a deeper level, she will not experience that same friction. When things end she will not be shocked, because she knew it was coming. She doesn't feel a lot of resistance because she has accepted that this is the way nature is; it cannot be any other way (MN 87).

The characteristic of impermanence is closely related to the second theme, unsatisfactoriness (dukkha). Since things are impermanent they cannot provide lasting

satisfaction (SN 22:45). The texts do not depict the Buddha as claiming that there is no gratification to be found in the world – quite the contrary, but he is pointing out the inherent drawbacks and dangers in sensual experiences and relationships (AN 3:105). The Buddhist texts suggest that satisfaction that arises due to the stimulation of the senses is relative. That is, if one is used to high standards of comfort or pleasure, then experiences that are lesser than what one is used to will feel unsatisfactory. Because of this, in order to stay excited and satisfied, one would need to continually exceed the previous experiences, which might become increasingly difficult. The relativity of feelings of satisfaction means that pleasure and displeasure will be experienced in roughly equal measures regardless of the standard of living, or of the access to sensual pleasures (AN 8:6).

The well-being that comes from relations have aspects that might be more meaningful than that of purely sensual pleasures, but this kind of well-being is also unsatisfactory because of the inherent changeability and impermanence of all things. The Buddhist perspective emphasise that relationships inevitably will change and come to an end, in one way or another. When it does one experiences dukkha proportionally to how attached one has become to the other person (MN 87). Thus the Buddha asserted that unsatisfactoriness is an inherent characteristic in all things (DhpB 278).

The last of the three characteristics, non-self (anattā), is probably the one that is most difficult to grasp intellectually. The Buddhist texts assert that phenomena that are impermanent and unsatisfactory cannot be taken as a true self (SN 22:59), where self refers to an unchanging and immutable core (Rahula, 1959). Rahula (1959) argue that other aspects of the Buddhist training can be found in other teachings, but that the Buddhist doctrine of non-self is what sets the Buddha's teachings apart from other religions and spiritual traditions. One's sense of self, and the identification one feels to one's body, thoughts, memories, and so on, is according to the Buddha nothing more than a mental construct. A nun at the time of the

Buddha, Vajirā, explained this with the simile of the chariot (SN 5:10), and it is further elaborated in the dialogue between the monk Nāgasena and King Milinda (Mil 1:1): A chariot consists of many parts, such as axle, wheels, chassis, reins, yoke and so on. However, it is only when these parts come together in a certain configuration that we call it a chariot. None of the parts is by themselves a chariot, nor the essence or core of 'chariot'. Chariot is only a term; an agreed upon way of speaking about a temporary coming together of various components – none of which by themselves can be regarded as the core. The Pāli Canon suggests that according to the Buddha it is the same situation with people. He argued that one typically assume there to be an unchanging core, which in turn gives rise to identification and me- and mine-making (my body, my career, my husband, and so on). However, when one analyses the different components it is hard to find such a core (SN 18:22).

The second discourse the Buddha gave after his awakening was on this subject (this discourse can be found in its entirety in Appendix C). He analysed the person according to the five aggregates: (physical) form, feelings, perceptions, volitional formations, and consciousness. He first pointed out that if these things really were self, they wouldn't lead to affliction, one would be able to control them. Since they do lead to affliction and since one cannot control them, the Buddha concluded that they cannot be taken to be a true self. Furthermore he pointed out that all these aggregates are impermanent and therefore unsatisfactory, and that this too is incompatible with a true self (SN 22:59).

3.5 Insight Meditation

As has been explained above, according to the Buddhist texts, dukkha arises because of taṇhā, and taṇhā arises due to mistaken views that things can be lasting, satisfactory, or worth regarding as me or mine. The way to correct this problem is by replacing these wrong views with right views. In this section we will describe some ways this is done in Buddhist practice.

In the view of the classical texts, the development of calm and focus goes hand in hand with the development of insight and wisdom. Stillness and clarity of mind leads to a better understanding of the workings of the mind, and this deeper understanding is helpful in achieving even greater degrees of peace. Thus these two qualities work in tandem (AN 2:30, AN 4.170). Meditations that aim towards insight often entail only a slight shift of focus from those that aim for calm and clarity. The objects of meditation can remain the same (for example the breath), but with the focus turned towards observing the object in the perspective of one of the three characteristics (for example impermanence). In practice this would be done by continuously contemplating the arising and passing away of sensations connected with the process of breathing (MN 10.5).

Another way of developing insight meditations is to take up a specific theme for systematic analysis, such as the Four Noble Truths, or the characteristic of non-self. In practice this could be done by analysing oneself systematically following the categorisation of the five aggregates mentioned earlier (SN 22:59), or according to the six sense-bases (the mind is regarded as the sixth sense in Buddhist psychology, with thoughts, feelings, memories, and so on as the sense objects) (MN 148). The Buddhist analysis often follows the reductio ad absurdum form of argument. Examples of this are consistently found in the contemplations of the three characteristics: If the body was self (attā), one would be able to yield control over it and one could deny it from growing old, getting sick, and die. One does not yield such control over the body, ergo the body is not self (SN 22:59). If thought were self, opinions would not change, thoughts would not come and go, and the rise and fall of thoughts would not be discerned. Thoughts are impermanent and changeable, ergo the thoughts are not self (MN 148). The Buddha encouraged his disciples to contemplate in such ways frequently, and said that if they remain focused on such themes clear knowing will arise, and avijjā will be abandoned (Iti 3:36).

Chah (2007a) argue that since it is nature itself the meditator is trying to comprehend, a copious amount of theoretical knowledge is not necessary. He claims that it even could be detrimental because the practitioner might get too preoccupied with labels and concepts at the expense of unbiased scrutiny of the actual experience. Unbiased scrutiny would reveal the three characteristics, regardless of the meditator's theoretical knowledge, because they are inherent in nature. Chah (2004) suggest that the world is what it is, but different individuals perceive the world in different ways depending on their views, biological traits, and personal histories. He points out that if there are big discrepancies between how the world truly is and how a person perceives it, it will lead to emotional friction. However, when the person's views are in better correspondence with how the world is, less emotional friction is created.

In this chapter we have discussed the core Buddhist teachings pertaining to the training of the mind. We have explored how the early texts explain the process of change and we have discussed the elements that are considered essential for the letting go of suffering. In the following chapter we will compare this perspective with the principles and process of change in MBSR, especially in light of the three fundamental building blocks of Buddhist practice; morality, meditation, and wisdom.

4. The MBSR Program From a Buddhist Perspective

The founders of MBSR have been forthright about the fact that the mindfulness techniques originate from Buddhism (Kabat-Zinn, 2013b). In this chapter we will discuss the MBSR literature in order to examine the extent to which the basic Buddhist framework of the Four Noble Truths has been adopted into MBSR. Further, we will discuss to what extent – and in what ways – the factors that are considered essential for mental development in Buddhism has been incorporated into the MBSR program.

4.1 The Four Noble Truths and the MBSR program

As explained above, the starting point of Buddhism is dukkha (of which the most common translation is *suffering*). In MBSR stress is seen as the starting point and is viewed in the following way: "At root, stress is a natural part of living from which there is no more escape than from the human condition itself" (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p. 2). This way of describing stress is very similar to how dukkha is described in the context of the universal characteristics. It has been argued that the MBSR program differs from Buddhism in its main objective, as it focuses on reducing stress rather than suffering (Purser & Loy, 2013). There are however some Buddhist translators, e.g. Ṭhānissaro (1998, 2007), that also prefers the translation *stress* or *stressful* for dukkha. It is worth noting that he uses the joined term "stress & suffering" when describing the stronger aspects of dukkha. Translating dukkha as stress is supported by Analayo (2003) who points out that etymologically dukkha is derived from the Sanskrit antithetic prefix *du*, which means difficulty or badness, and *kha*, one meaning of which is the axle hole of a wheel. This image suggests disharmony, friction, or stress as valid translations of dukkha. Translators who prefer to translate dukkha as suffering also admit that dukkha refers to a more universal sense of unsatisfactoriness, and that suffering in some instances is too strong a word (Bodhi, 1994). Kabat-Zinn (2013b) discusses this point and says that MBSR never intended to decontextualize or fragment the Buddhist teachings, but rather to recontextualize it in such a way that it would be accessible for patients and health professionals in non-Buddhist countries. The dukkha that is confronted in MBSR is of wider range and depth than stress in the common understanding of the word, and Kabat-Zinn (2013b) explained that he chose to use the word *stress* instead of dukkha because people in western cultures can relate to it instinctively. He further remarks that: "hospitals do function as 'dukkha magnets' in our society, pulling for stress, pain of all kinds, disease and illness, especially when they have reached levels where it is impossible to ignore them" (Kabat-Zinn,

2013b, p. 288) and that hospitals therefore the most suitable place for MBSR-courses. On the basis of these considerations, it could be argued that the points of departure for MBSR and Buddhism might not be that different.

It seems Buddhist traditions and MBSR share a dimensional view on disorder, both differing from the more traditional western categorical understanding of illness (see Brown & Barlow, 2005). In the Buddhist perspective, human dissatisfaction and suffering is viewed as normal and an inherent part of the human condition and mindfulness training is employed as a means to gradually let go of increasingly deeper levels of dukkha (Sumedho, 1992). The training doesn't stop once the practitioner is on par with most others in terms of functioning, but continues until he or she has reached a state of super-functioning. The ultimate goal is the complete freedom from dissatisfaction and suffering (SN 56:11).

MBSR has a similar view on the aim of the mindfulness practices. It is not viewed as exercises to be undertaken by the ill in order to regain a normal healthy baseline, but as practices that are beneficial for all (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). One of the requirements for MBSR instructors is to personally maintain a daily meditation practice (Santorelli, 2014). This illustrates how the conception of the aim of practice in the MBSR tradition is more in line with the dimensional view of the Four Noble Truths in Buddhism, than with the categorical view of normality and pathology of that has been prevalent in modern psychiatric healthcare. It could be argued that the aims of the MBSR and Buddhist practice are different since MBSR focus on reducing the stress and suffering in daily life, while for the Buddhist practitioner the aim is the absolute cessation of all dukkha, Nibbāna. This difference might not be that important, since it is arguably a difference with regard to distance rather than direction; how far the practitioner is encouraged to pursue the practice rather than a difference in the understanding of how the mechanisms that allow freedom from mental discontent operate. Teasdale and Chaskalson (2013a) lend support to this view by arguing that the mechanisms of

mind the Buddha posited fundamentally underlie every level of dukkha, thus making it relevant regardless of whether the goal is freedom from emotional distress as in psychotherapy, or awakening as in the practice of the Buddhist monk or nun.

Although there are no explicit references to the Four Noble Truths in the MBSR Curriculum Guide or the MBSR Standards of Practice, many of the themes from these teachings are present. As in the Four Noble Truths, it is pointed out by Blacker and Kabat-Zinn (2009) that the key to one's well-being does not lie in the external conditions, i.e. the stressors, but in how one relates to, and manages to handle the stressful conditions. Kabat-Zinn (1990) remarks that it is possible to have a pleasant mental experience even though the body is in great pain, and Teasdale and Chaskalson (2013a) points out that learning to relate to difficulties in life in a way that does not give rise to dukkha is a major focus in what is taught in MBSR and MBCT. It is also argued that the strategy of escaping or denying difficulties, although sometimes adaptive, often is limiting or destructive, and that in order to understand suffering one has to face it, or as described by Stahl and Goldstein (2010); turn into the skid. This stance on suffering resonates with the First Noble Truth in Buddhism.

In the group discussion in Class Four, the course instructor is asked to emphasis how stress is related to expectations about the world and to not getting what one wants. This resembles the Second Noble Truth in Buddhism. Expectations and wanting are related to taṇhā, and here, as in the Buddhist teachings, it is pointed out that expectations and wanting are related to stress or dukkha (SN 56:11; Blacker & Kabat-Zinn, 2009).

Acceptance and letting go is mentioned several times throughout the course, and the patient is encouraged to invite experiences in, both the painful and the pleasant, and to let go of the tendency to hold on or push away (Blacker & Kabat-Zinn, 2009). Santorelli (2014) points out that mindfulness is more about letting go than holding the attention locked on target by way of force and willpower. Mindfulness cannot be forced, just as one cannot force

oneself to go to sleep. “You have to create the right conditions for falling asleep and then you have to let go” (Santorelli, 2014, p. 13). These attitudes closely resemble the attitudes encouraged in the Third Noble Truth, which suggests that it is the letting go of grasping the desired, and pushing away the unwanted, that is the path to peace and contentment.

Finally, with regards to the Fourth Noble Truth, it is stressed that if one joins an MBSR-course, but expect results without active participation, one will be disappointed. Willingness to practice, both when it is easy as well as when it is difficult is indispensable (Santorelli, 2014). The Fourth Noble Truth is based on the idea that through following a mental training program one can overcome dukkha. This optimism is reflected in the first attitude the MBSR-instructor endeavours to convey to the participants: “There is more right with you than wrong with you, no matter what challenges you are facing.” (Blacker & Kabat-Zinn, 2009, p. 2).

In the later books the references to the teachings of the Buddha are made in a plain and more explicit way. Kabat-Zinn (2005) briefly presents the Four Noble Truths as the core teaching of the Buddha. In regards to the Eightfold Path he acknowledges that all the factors are to be practiced together, but adds that each factor contains all the others, that they are different aspects of a seamless whole. Perhaps this has been one of the principles that have led him to design a meditation-based intervention that at first glance might seem to consist entirely of the mindfulness-factor. He backs up his viewpoint by quoting the Buddhist master Thich Nhat Hanh: “When Right Mindfulness is present, the Four Noble Truths and the seven other elements of the Eightfold Path are also present.” (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, p. 138). This raises an important question; is it possible reach Right Mindfulness without ever practicing the other 7 factors of the path?

Following the framework of the Threefold Training, we will now continue to discuss the role of the Fourth Noble Truth in MBSR in greater detail. The three trainings of Morality,

Meditation, and Wisdom subsume all the factors of the Eightfold path, and will be discussed in order.

4.2 The Role of Morality in MBSR

There are few explicit references to personal standards of morality in the primary sources of MBSR. In the MBSR Standards of Practice, the instructor is encouraged to create an atmosphere of mutual respect that feels safe, sensitive, and authentic. It is also mentioned that integral to MBSR-practice is the cultivation of certain interdependent attitudes. Trust in oneself and one's own moral compass is one of these attitudes, and it suggests that the more the practitioner has cultivated this trust, the easier it is to see the basic goodness in other people (Santorelli, 2014). The MBSR Curriculum Guide contains a section for which the participants have filled out a difficult communications calendar. These difficult experiences are used to explore patterns of communication and their consequences. It could be argued that this exercise has similarities with the Buddhist commandments and practices regarding right speech. Loving-kindness meditation is also practiced during the MBSR-course. This practice aims to cultivate feelings of compassion and friendliness, towards self and others (Blacker & Kabat-Zinn, 2009). McCown et al. (2010) explains that loving-kindness practices often help the participants connecting their personal meditation practice to their daily life experiences and to their relationships. He suggests that the focus such practices may help to extend the effects of the participants' individual transformation to their families, social circles, and workplaces, and may also lead to higher political and environmental awareness.

The lack of direct teaching on morality in the primary sources of MBSR might lead to the suspicion that the founders of MBSR completely disregarded this aspect of Buddhist practice. However, Kabat-Zinn (2013b) answer this objection by stating that ethics was at no point disregarded in the development of MBSR, and that the awareness of the co-dependent nature of the different aspects of Buddhist practice was central in that work. He argues that

ethics and morality form the foundation for mindfulness practice, because immoral conduct clouds and distorts the clear awareness necessary for mindfulness. This perspective on the effect of immoral conduct is much like that found in the Buddhist tradition (AN 11:2). However, Kabat-Zinn points out that because of the risk of being perceived as moralistic or sermonizing, it was considered more effective to teach morality by example. He further writes that conversations about morality are not avoided, but are engaged in when questions regarding ethics or moral conduct arise (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). The moral base suggested in the more recent book by Kabat-Zinn (2005) is identical to the five moral precepts in Buddhism: refraining from killing living beings, stealing, lying, adultery, drugs and alcohol (AN 8:39). In addition to teaching by way of modelling and by engaging in conversations about morality when such questions arise, Kabat-Zinn (2013b) states that an awareness of conduct and its consequences are intrinsic aspects of the cultivation of mindfulness, and arise naturally as a result of mindfulness practice. Issues regarding the implicit transmission of ethical awareness will be discussed further in the next chapter.

4.3 The Role of Meditation in MBSR

As is evident from the name of the program, mindfulness is a very central skill developed in MBSR. Mindfulness in the MBSR-literature is defined as purposeful and non-judgmental attention in the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2013b). This is very close to how mindfulness is viewed in the Buddhist tradition (Bodhi, 2013), although some authors have argued that mindfulness not always is non-judgemental, and that it sometimes can take up objects from the past (Dreyfus, 2013). The cultivation of mindfulness is pivotal also in the Buddhist training, from the beginning stages of developing goodness, through to the stilling of the mind, and finally in the development of wisdom (MN 10; MN 117). In the Buddhist meditations mindfulness is cultivated by directing it to the four foundations of mindfulness: Body, feelings, mind, and mental objects (MN 10). In MBSR, patients are taught mindfulness

of the body in the forms of the body-scan, awareness of the breathing, and the meditative yoga exercises. These exercises are employed throughout the course. They are also introduced to mindfulness of thoughts and emotions already in the opening meditation in Class One, and this awareness of thought-patterns and emotional responses are emphasised frequently also in later classes (Blacker & Kabat-Zinn, 2009).

In the Buddhist texts, the practitioner is encouraged to cultivate mindfulness in the direction of the jhānas (the deep states of meditation explained in the previous chapter). While the states corresponding to the jhānas might not be talked about directly in the MBSR Curriculum Guide, it is certainly mentioned that deep states of relaxation, calm, and concentrated awareness can arise from the practice of mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). References to experiences more specific to deep samādhi – like absorption into the meditation object, a feeling of timelessness, and seclusion from the world outside – are also found, particularly in the later writings (Brahm, 2006; Kabat-Zinn, 1994, 2005). It may be natural that such states are stressed more in the Buddhist tradition, as they are advanced stages of meditation that might be more readily achieved by monks living lives more conducive to mental stillness. Although the jhānas are not as prominent in MBSR as it is in the Buddhist texts, several of the techniques used in the Buddhist practice to reach such states are. Mindfulness of breathing, mindfulness of the body (the body scan technique), and loving-kindness meditations are very central to the MBSR training (Kabat-Zinn, 1990), and these methods are commonly used in the Buddhist training to cultivate samādhi as well (MN 118; MN 119; AN 8:63). The function of samādhi is also mentioned in the MBSR-literature, and as in the Buddhist tradition it is pointed out that in order to be able to look deeply into something one needs a stable and still mind (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

There are many similarities between MBSR and the Buddhist training in samādhi, and few differences, both when it comes to the techniques practiced and to how these skills are

thought to function. The differences that exist seem to be more related to the depth of the states the practitioner is urged to pursue, rather than what methods are used and how these practices are employed.

4.4 The Role of Wisdom in MBSR

In the early Buddhist texts the contemplations that aim for insight and wisdom are very explicit and prominent. Examples include contemplations of the Four Noble Truths, the three characteristics, unattractiveness of the body, and death (SN 56:11; AN 10:60; SN 22:59; MN 119; AN 6:19). In Class Three of the MBSR-course the participants are asked to notice:

> . . . the tendency of the mind to label events as pleasant or unpleasant, the way we push away what is unpleasant and grasp what we perceive to be pleasant, and the role of conditioning. Questioning of our relationship to self-narratives and fixed ideas and opinions about the nature of reality as personally experienced. (Blacker & Kabat-Zinn, 2009, p. 6)

This is an exercise that bears much resemblance to Buddhist contemplations that aim towards the development of insight. Noticing the pushing away of unpleasant experiences and the grasping of the pleasant also characterizes contemplations of the Four Noble Truths; pushing away and grasping being aspects of taṇhā. The bare attention to these habitual responses can be a subtle way of making the patient take a step back from them, thereby briefly letting go of such responses. This may open up for the recognition that constantly pushing away and grasping often lead to feelings of resentment and dissatisfaction, and that letting go of them can lead to peace and contentment. It is clear that pushing away often can give immediate relief from the unpleasant and that grasping often give immediate pleasure, and thus by noticing the role of conditioning the patient can come to understand the reason why one tend to follow these patterns. The principles of operant conditioning describe how a behavioural pattern will increase if is reinforced (followed by a pleasant stimulus) and

decrease if it is punished (followed by an unpleasant stimulus). This might be a learning mechanism that make living beings very adaptive, but one its drawbacks is its short-sightedness. Behaviours that give pleasant results immediately, but unpleasant results in the long run are often reinforced (Domjan, Grau, & Krause, 2010). From this it is easy to understand why one habitually pushes away the unpleasant and grasps the pleasant. This realisation that pushing away and grasping is the cause of dissatisfaction, not satisfaction, is the crux of the Four Noble Truths.

The second part of the quote above resembles the universal characteristics. The participant is encouraged to question her relationship to her self-narratives and fixed views about the nature of reality. Exercise 4 in Kabat-Zinn (1990) is describing briefly how this can be done. In that exercise the meditator is encouraged to focus mindfulness on thoughts as they come and go, and to keep the awareness on the impermanent nature of each individual thought. Next, the meditator is prompted to notice the identification tied up with the thinking process, and how the mind is creating a *self*: "Note those thoughts that are 'I,' 'me,' or 'mine,' thoughts, observing carefully how 'you,' the non-judging observer, feel about them" (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p. 74). After this the focus goes back to impermanence once again, but this time to the impermanent nature of the moods and feelings that arise. In a note to this exercise, Kabat-Zinn stresses that this exercise requires deep concentration, and that for beginners it should only be done for shorter periods of time.

This exercise bears many similarities to how a meditation on the three characteristics is carried out in a Buddhist practice. Although not attributed to the Buddhist framework, both impermanence and non-self are thematized in the MBSR course. A Buddhist contemplation of the characteristics however, would usually not be limited to just thoughts and feelings, but include all aspects of the being: physical matter, feelings, thoughts, volitions, memory, perception, and consciousness itself (SN 22:59).

Apart from this exercise, the MBSR course does not seem to contain exercises or contemplations that are specifically aimed at developing wisdom and insight the way the Buddhist practice does. This does not mean however, than in the Buddhist view MBSR-training won't lead to insight and wisdom. Although it can be argued that mindfulness of the breath and of the body (in particular the body-scan technique) is most commonly practiced with the aim of developing tranquillity and concentration, these meditations can well be focused towards the development of insight once the necessary calm is achieved (MN 118; MN 119). In the Buddhist view nature is presenting the fundamental truths about itself continuously. Nature is simply the way it is, and cannot be any other way. For one's views to align themselves more closely to how things really are, all one needs to do is to observe nature (Chah, 2004). The receptive, non-judgmental attention to the present-moment encouraged in MBSR is very much in line with this attitude (Blacker & Kabat-Zinn, 2009).

Kabat-Zinn (1990) claims that the cultivation of mindfulness is a wellspring for self-understanding and insight, and stresses that it is through the acceptance of the way things are– regardless of how undesirable that might be–that growth and healing can come about. Furthermore, he argues that insight is extremely important in the process of coming to terms with one's condition, in learning to live with dukkha, not just enduring it. He also states that insight and wisdom only come about when the mind is settled in a state in which one does not hold on to or reject anything (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Another feature of insight that is described is the broad generalization that such insights allow. Because of the universality of the three characteristics, an insight into one specific experience can be generalizable to all experiences, as ". . . the whole world is represented in it" (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p. 135).

Although there are no formal contemplations of the three characteristics as universal to all things and experiences in the MBSR-course, there are many references to them in the literature, and we will discuss some references to these characteristics here. The characteristic

of impermanence is given a fair deal of attention in Kabat-Zinn's (1990) first book, being the subject of an entire chapter. In the opening of the chapter he urges the reader to accept change as an integral part of life rather than as a threat. He then ties this notion with the practice of mindfulness in a subtle manner: "In focusing on the breath when we meditate, we are learning right from the start to get comfortable with change" (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p. 49). He points out that this impermanence encompass everything, the earth we live on, our relationships, our bodies, our thoughts, and everything in between. According to Kabat-Zinn (1990) nothing is absolutely stable, although some things appear to be because they are changing slowly. Just as death is in the very nature of life, "impermanence is in the very nature of things and relationships" (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p. 323). He stresses the point that one's ability to adapt to the changing conditions depends on how one perceives change itself and the meaning one attributes to the events. It depends on one's beliefs about oneself and life, and about the degree of mindfulness one can bring into the moment.

The characteristic of dukkha is also addressed in the MBSR literature. Kabat-Zinn (1990) points out that stress is a natural and unavoidable part of life, and that an escape from this characteristic of the human condition is impossible. This, however, does not mean that he views the escape from feelings of dissatisfaction and unhappiness as impossible. He states that even though it might be impossible to avoid all difficult or unpleasant experiences in life, one can learn to respond to them in such a that they do not give rise to suffering. Later in the book, he says that it is not the stressors themselves that determine our feelings and ability to cope, but rather how we perceive those stressors. Thus, healing is not about avoiding stressors, but occurs by changing our views and perceptions about the stressful conditions we exist in. Kabat-Zinn (1990) points out that in order to be able to relate to the stressful conditions of life in a more healthy way one would have to stop running away and hide, one has to face the difficult thoughts and feelings that arise, and invite them into the mind.

In a later book, Kabat-Zinn (2005) remarks that there is a strong link between the characteristic of dukkha and that of anattā (not-self), in that there is much stress created from not knowing who or what one is on a fundamental level. He claims that when the "I" construct is challenged, one can feel diminished, insecure and defensive and that this uncertainty creates un underlying unsettledness and dissatisfaction in life (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

Kabat-Zinn (1990) makes many references to anattā despite him mentioning in a more recent article that anattā is "trickier and scarier, and needs to be held very gently and skillfully, letting it emerge out of the participants' own reports of their experience rather than stated as a fact" (Kabat-Zinn, 2013b, p. 299). This consideration might be a reason why this fundamental characteristic of the Buddhist teachings is not made more explicit in MBSR, but is found in indirect and implicit ways. There are indications that this indirect presentation of anattā resonates among participants, as Kabat-Zinn (2013a) states that many participants find the realisation that "they are not their thoughts" to be the most valuable experience from the MBSR program.

It is pointed out that in meditation one might realize that the "awareness of sensations, thoughts, and feelings is different from the sensations, the thoughts, and the feelings themselves" (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p. 297), and that when one identifies with these things there is much more dissatisfaction and suffering than when one instead identifies with awareness itself. Kabat-Zinn ties such realizations directly to feelings of freedom and well-being: "It is remarkable how liberating it feels to be able to see that your thoughts are just thoughts and that they are not 'you' or 'reality'" (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p. 69).

Regarding the body, Kabat-Zinn (1990) asks rhetorically in an early chapter; "every seven years all the atoms in our body have come and gone, replaced by others from outside of us. (…) What am I if little of the substance of my body is the same in any decade of my life?" (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p. 47). He leaves the question unanswered, but comes back to the theme in

a later chapter. According to Kabat-Zinn (1990), when letting go occurs, all concepts dissolve into a stillness which enables the realization that one is not one's body, even though the body is there for one to make use of. And further, "If you are not your body, then you cannot possibly be your body's pain" (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p. 298).

While the approach to anattā in MBSR is gentle and cautious, the Buddha appeared to be more assertive and challenging when dealing with this subject. It is worthwhile however, to take into account the differing audiences of these two traditions. While the participants in MBSR are people with various religious backgrounds, most of the Buddha's sermons were delivered to his own monks, or to people sympathetic to his teachings. When the Buddha spoke to people unfamiliar with his teachings, he often gave a gradual instruction in which he opened with much less contentious issues, and only when he noticed that their minds were ready did he delve into the more challenging themes (Ud 5:3; DN 3.2.21). In a similar way, it is not difficult to see the difference in how Kabat-Zinn presents the characteristic of non-self in his earliest book (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) to his newer book (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Perhaps Kabat-Zinn now considers his audience ready for the deeper and more demanding issues.

In the later book, Kabat-Zinn (2005) draws parallels between the views of modern science, in particular that of biology, physics, and chemistry, and the Buddhist view of non-self. He maintains that both standpoints would argue in similar ways, that living beings are made up by conditioned and co-dependent phenomena, and that no permanent and unchanging self-ness can be found in such a system. Furthermore, both standpoints argue that the concept of self is a misperception that has built itself into the minds of people. It has become "an unquestioned part of our conventional reality" (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, p. 327). Kabat-Zinn continues by suggesting that if one can learn to question this process of identification, and come to realize the resulting stress that occurs when the sense of self is solidifying around experiences and appearances, the result would be a sense of ease and freedom. He says that if

one views the self as a construct of the mind rather than as an entity separate from all other things, one might become less self-preoccupied, more attuned to the interconnectedness of people and of the world, more caring and compassionate, and it might open up to a feeling of wholeness and wonder. He says further that this knowledge of non-self can be known on different levels, and that the intellectual knowing is a more shallow understanding. The deeper way of knowing he refers to as "knowing it with the entirety of our being" (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, p. 329). This understanding of the nature of insight is also found in the Buddhist texts, where it is stated that there are three levels of understanding; Understanding that is based on learning, understanding that is based on thinking and reflection, and finally, understanding that arises through meditation (DN 33.1.10; Vism XIV:14).

Kabat-Zinn (1994) emphasises that although deep states of samādhi, realizations and insight do come with continued practice, one does not practice to make these things happen. The aim of the practice is letting go, acceptance, and a complete embracing of the way things are here and now. Ambitions about achieving special states or knowledge would be in the opposite direction of that aim, and would paradoxically prevent them from arising. This is in harmony with the Buddhist attitude as well, as for example Chah (1985) who told his students: "Don't try to get anywhere in practice. The very desire to be free or to be enlightened will be the desire that prevents your freedom" (Chah, 1985, pp. 149-150). He continued by saying that the energy that comes from desire causes doubts and restlessness, and that no matter how hard one tries, as long as one has the desire to achieve, peace will not be found. He ends by encouraging: "Simply let go. Watch the mind and body mindfully, but don't try to achieve anything" (Chah, 1985, p. 150).

4.5 Comparing Buddhist and MBSR Perspectives on the Process of Change

Comparing MBSR to a Buddhist perspective with regards to how the process of change is thought to operate shows that there are similarities in the view on how this occurs,

but slight differences in how this is presented in the teachings. Both traditions argue that the fundamental cause of much of the stress and dissatisfaction people experience is misalignment between how experiences and phenomena of the world are viewed and how they really are (SN 12:2; SN 35:79; Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Both traditions also maintain that it is more beneficial to practice in such a way as to change one's basic attitudes and expectations to fit the way of nature, than to try and change nature to fit one's hopes and unrealistic assumptions (Chah, 2007b; Kabat-Zinn, 1990). The Buddhist perspective is more blunt in claiming that people have mistaken presuppositions about themselves and the ways of nature that colours thoughts, emotions, and behaviour, and that these wrong views give rise to defilements such as greed and hatred (AN 3:126), and consequently to dukkha (SN 56:11). MBSR is founded on the same understanding, but frames it in a noticeably more careful, positive and affirming manner:

> This transformation of view comes about in many different ways as people immerse themselves in mindfulness-meditation practice. In the stress clinic, sometimes people have sudden and dramatic experiences during meditation that lead them to new ways of seeing. (…) Out of this shift in perspective comes an ability to act with greater balance and inner security in the world, especially when encountering stress or pain. (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, pp. 168-169)

Kabat-Zinn seems to be less concerned with explaining what the change taking place entails, than would be normal in the Buddhist traditions we have examined. However, Buddhist teachers typically also place more emphasis on explaining the principles of practice than about the nature of the resulting states (Brahm, 2006).

With regard to how the alteration of fundamental views come about, both traditions agree that views are changed by insights experienced in (or as a result of) meditation, and that such insights are made possible by the sharpening and stilling of attention (MN 39; Kabat-

Zinn, 1994). The Buddhist perspective and MBSR harmonise in how the training of attention is carried out; through the systematic practice of mindfulness exercises (MN 10; Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Although the function and benefit of morality is understood in similar ways, the Buddhist perspective is more direct and specific than MBSR concerning the importance of a personal moral level of purity for deep states of clarity and stillness to occur (MN 107, AN 11:1). This factor is not, as we have seen, altogether absent from the MBSR teaching, but is approached in a significantly more indirect and exploratory manner (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, 2013b).

As discussed above, while some aspects of the Buddhist training – like the development of mindfulness – is taught very explicitly, other aspects are taught more indirectly and implicitly – for example morality and non-self. Kabat-Zinn (2013b) acknowledges this himself in a recent article. He also points out that the culture in the west has changed significantly during the three decades since the founding of the Stress Reduction Clinic, and that concepts he formerly had to avoid or conceal to prevent being stamped as New Age or unscientific, can now be talked more openly about. Making certain parts of the course curriculum implicit and indirect may have pedagogical value, but might also demand higher competence of instructors. If the instructors have unsatisfactory understanding of certain elements, there is increased possibility that those elements will not be taught in the manner it was intended to be.

In this chapter we have looked at how the fundamental teachings of Buddhism have been included in MBSR, particularly with regards to the Four Noble Truths and the Threefold Training of morality, meditation, and wisdom. We have also compared the process perspective of the two traditions, and shown their differences and similarities. The apparent existence of an implicit Buddhist framework in the MBSR program raises important questions

regarding the use of MBSR in healthcare and psychiatry. In the following chapter we will discuss the challenges facing this way of teaching mindfulness in a modern western context.

5. Buddhist-Based Practices in a Western Secular Context

As noted in the introduction to this thesis, Kabat-Zinn (2013b) has described MBSR as a re-contextualization of the teachings of the Buddha, and a "skilful means" of bringing these teachings into a new time and setting. Our discussion of the content of the MBSR program support the suggestion that MBSR as presented today contain aspects from all of the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism, and that it in this way reflects a traditional Buddhist understanding of the nature of suffering and healing. Although the Buddhist origins of mindfulness is mentioned in MBSR courses, the extent of the application of the Buddhist framework does not seem to be made explicit to the participants. Instead, this Buddhist framework exists implicitly in the content and practices of the course. How can we understand the pedagogical choices of Kabat-Zinn when designing MBSR, and what are the strengths of, and potential challenges to, this way of teaching mindfulness?

In this chapter we will discuss several issues related to the criticisms that have been raised in the wake of the "mindfulness revolution". We will discuss the possible problems related to employing techniques extracted out of a broader practice, as well as challenges of incorporating elements often regarded as the domain of religion into the practice of psychotherapy. We will also discuss the position of Buddhism in the border regions between religion, philosophy, and psychology, and what implications its classification has on its possible role in therapy.

5.1 Zen and the Pedagogy of MBSR

In order to understand the pedagogy of MBSR, it might be relevant to consider the style of teaching characteristic to the Buddhist traditions in which it has its origins. Kabat-Zinn (2013b) has described MBSR as having its roots in both the Theravada and Zen

traditions of Buddhism. According to Matthews and Hattam (2004), the Zen tradition stands in contrast to other Buddhist traditions with regard to its style of teaching. They explain that the different traditions are generally taking two different routes in this respect. Some Buddhist lineages focus on gradual enlightenment through a constant refining of conceptual understanding, whereas Zen dismisses conceptualization in exchange for sudden realizations. According to Thich Nhat Hanh the transmission of enlightenment in Zen does not exist in the scriptures or in the words, but rather in a ". . . direct pointing to the heart of reality so that we might see into our own nature and wake up" (in Matthews & Hattam, 2004, p. 4). In this tradition, words are seen as having the paradoxical effect of potentially clouding and concealing the phenomena to which they refer (Matthews & Hattam, 2004).

In a recent paper, Kabat-Zinn (2013b) acknowledges the impact of Zen in designing MBSR. According to Kabat-Zinn (2013b, p. 292), this approach ". . . reinforced the sense that what is involved in mindfulness practice is not merely a matter of the intellect or cognition or scholarship, but of direct authentic full-spectrum first-person experience". This Zen-heritage might help us understand some of the reason for the implicit presentation of the Buddhist framework throughout the MBSR-course. The Three Trainings are introduced not as fact or rules, but rather through a systematic directing of attention towards different phenomena available in the moment. This seems to be in line with aspects of Zen-pedagogy.

Our discussion in the previous chapter indicates that the generally implicit manner in which the Buddhist framework of MBSR is introduced, must also be understood as a way of avoiding the potential stigma related to being viewed as a religious practice. The implicit teaching style of MBSR might therefore serve two important functions, both being a pedagogically grounded choice, as well as making the curriculum more accessible and relevant in western settings. The widespread use and popularity of MBSR today indicates that this way of introducing Buddhist concepts in the program has resonated with a western

population. Still, the potential implications of this strategy raise important questions. What are the challenges with this way of teaching mindfulness in MBSR? We will further discuss these issues related to the Buddhist trainings of insight and ethics.

5.2 Buddhist Insights in a Western Secular Context

5.2.1 MBSR and medical ethics. Although avoiding an explicit presentation of the Buddhist framework underlying the mindfulness-practice in MBSR might be effective in gaining acceptance in the West, as well as in line with Zen Buddhism, it could be in conflict with its moral obligations as a part of professional healthcare. According to Kabat-Zinn (2013b, p. 298) the Dharma can reveal itself ". . . through skilful and ardent cultivation via formal and informal practice". Furthermore he states that the three universal characteristics will be self-revealing without a need for invoking the Buddhist framework. Thus, the central question arising is not whether a reference to Buddhism is necessary for insight to occur, but rather if a reference to Buddhism might be necessary from an ethical viewpoint. If clients in MBSR-courses are implicitly being directed, through guided meditations, towards different insights about the world, then these goals might need to be made clear in the presentation of the course. As a medical intervention, MBSR has ethical responsibility to follow the principle of informed consent. In a medical context, informed consent reflects that a patient has been given the sufficient information by the health practitioner to be able to make an informed decision about the healthcare offered (Center for Healthcare Improvement, 2012). In order for this principle to be met, the discussion between the healthcare provider and the patient needs to be transparent and balanced with regard to what the treatment entails, as well as possible side effects. While the Buddhist characteristic of dukkha (suffering) and anicca (impermanence) seem hard to disagree with as universal human phenomenon, the third truth, anattā, might be more problematic. Kabat-Zinn (2013b) also makes this point, and sees anattā as the potentially most scary and tricky of the three universal truths. Still, he sees this truth as

something that might emerge naturally through small realizations happening as participants reflect on the parts of their experiences and body that they are *not.* In this way, a participant entering the course in order to lower stress levels, could potentially also leave with a transformed view of the world and the self. Although Kabat-Zinn sees these insights as universal truths that are self-evident, they are a part of a Buddhist curriculum, and as we shall see, not uncontroversial.

5.2.2 Buddhist insights and distressing psychological experiences. While the optimism regarding the healing potential of mindfulness in a range of different domains is seemingly endless, there has so far been little empirical focus on the potential averse effects of meditation (Grabovac, 2014). According to Grabovac (2014) there is a dominating view in the MBIs today that mindfulness has exclusively benign effects on mental health. However, within the Theravada tradition of Buddhism, the practice of meditation is understood as being potentially challenging, as the meditator progresses through different stages of insight. These stages of insight are described as a gradually deeper understanding of the Four Noble Truths and the Three Characteristics of experience. These insights are seen to occur through meditation in a somewhat predictable, sequential manner, and may involve highly problematic psychological states for the meditator (Grabovac, 2014). These experiences can include states consistent with clinical depression, suicidality, mania, and psychosis, and may also persist after formal practice has ended (Grabovac, 2014). Sometimes referred to as *dark night* experiences, some meditators have reported becoming what Rocha (2014) calls "psychologically incapacitated" after alleged irreversible insights into the themes of emptiness and no-self. According to Rocha (2014), there are examples of meditators who have been impaired for several years after such experiences.

A study on participants in two week- and three month intensive meditation retreats showed that so-called "unusual experiences", such as hallucinations or visual and auditory

aberrations, occurred in 80 per cent of the participants (Kornfield, 1979). Intense mood alterations were also reported in a majority of the meditators. In practice characterized by deep concentration, it was also found that periods with experiences of insecurity and fear were normal (Kornfield, 1979). According to Kornfield (1979) these experiences should be understood as healthy perceptual changes happening as a part of intensive meditation practice. As seen in the discussion in the previous chapter, MBSR and Theravada Buddhism resemble each other in terms of the focus and the themes of practice, although the framework is not explicitly presented in MBSR as it is in Theravada Buddhism. According to Grabovac (2014), most participants in a typical MBI course of eight weeks will not reach the levels of skill and concentration required to make progress along the stages of insight. However, experiences from MBCT courses have shown that some participants indicate knowledge of the Three Characteristics after only a few sessions of the course (Grabovac, 2014). Furthermore, he points out that participants in most MBIs are encouraged to continue their practice outside the context of the group. It might therefore be possible for participants to have potentially challenging experiences on their own after the course has ended. This has important implications for the ethical responsibility of MBSR to inform participants about the potential challenges and new ways of seeing that mindfulness practice may stimulate.

According to Grabovac (2014), in the Theravada tradition, the stages of insight are generally not discussed with meditators until they have themselves encountered them in their practice. This is done deliberately, as a preoccupation with self-diagnosis regarding these stages can be counterproductive for the non-judgemental observation of the present moment without an effort to “get somewhere”. There are important differences between the setting of a traditional Buddhist meditator and an MBI course however. While some Buddhist instructors have described how they may provide support to meditators as challenges arise naturally, an MBI instructor has contact with participants only in a group setting and for a

limited amount of time (Grabovac, 2014). MBI instructors may therefore not have the luxury of being able to address these issues as they arise naturally in the practitioners. As addressed earlier, MBSR and the other MBIs may also have different ethical responsibilities as medical treatments in health care settings.

Although challenging experiences during insight meditation is a well-known phenomenon within the tradition of Theravada Buddhism, there is still limited knowledge regarding the extent to which these psychological states also arise in the setting of MBSR or other MBIs. As we have noted, the way in which meditators are introduced to the themes of non-self, suffering, and impermanence in MBSR is somewhat different from the way this is normally done in the Theravada tradition. While the different themes of insight are gradually made explicit to students of Theravada, these characteristics are addressed implicitly throughout the MBSR course, through different guided meditations and group discussions. It should also be noted that there is a difference between the long-term retreats studied by Kornfield (1979), and the 45-minute daily practice recommended in the MBSR program, both in duration and intensity. The experiences of the participants in the long lasting, intensive retreats might therefore not be equivalent to the experiences of those participating in an MBSR program. Further research is needed in order to understand to which degree troubling psychological experiences arise in MBSR and the other MBIs. Furthermore, it might be useful to study how the Buddhist perspective may help MBI instructors in responding adaptively to these psychological states as they arise.

5.3 MBSR and Implicit Morality

What are the challenges to and strengths of the way in which the MBSR program relates to the moral aspect of the Threefold Training? As discussed earlier in this paper, ethical conduct is in Theravada Buddhism considered an integral part of the process of change involved in meditation, serving to calm the mind, thereby setting the stage for further insight

and healing. As discussed in the introduction of this paper, many have criticized the contemporary practice of mindfulness on the grounds of lacking a moral foundation (Dreyfus, 2013; Purser & Loy, 2013; Shonin et al., 2013, 2014; Titmuss, 2013). Critical voices suggest that mindfulness without an ethical component might be less effective in its healing faculties, as well as opening up the possibility for mindfulness to be used as a means to questionable ends (Madsen, 2014; Monteiro et al., 2014; Purser & Milillo, 2014). Our exploration of the MBSR program suggests that it does not provide explicit moral guidelines, as is done in the traditional Buddhist teachings. Still, ethics is addressed in more subtle ways throughout the course.

As noted earlier in this paper, Kabat-Zinn (2013b) argues that an ethical awareness grows naturally out of mindfulness practice, and that this aspect of Buddhist practice therefore does not need to be addressed explicitly as a separate issue during the course. Two studies by Ruedy and Schweitzer (2010) support this argument. The first study indicates that people with high scores on mindfulness-scales report placing higher value on ethical standards, are more likely to follow those standards, and are more principled in their ethical decision-making, than people with low scores. The second study found that the group with high scores on mindfulness cheated less on a behavioural measure compared to the group with low scores. A single-group study with a two-month follow-up by Shapiro, Jazaieri, and Goldin (2012) found that moral reasoning and ethical decision-making did improve following an MBSR-course, as predicted by Kabat-Zinn (2013b). This lends further support to the suggestion that a sense of morality may arise naturally as a result of mindfulness practice, and that it may be effectively taught in an implicit manner.

Although indicating that high scores on measures of mindfulness are associated with ethical conduct, these empirical studies do not address the possible effect of an explicit teaching of morality in mindfulness-based interventions. Experiences from studies on

Meditation Awareness Training (MAT) may shed light on this issue (Van Gordon et al., 2014). According to Van Gordon et al. (2014) introducing ethical vows—as would be normal in Buddhist practices—into an MBI seemed to be experienced by participants as too direct and therefore disempowering. These experiences lend support to the suggestion that morality needs to be handled carefully when practicing mindfulness in a secular context.

Lindahl (2015) suggests that mindfulness research in the future need to focus on properly operationalizing Buddhist concepts, such as morality and insight. In this way their efficacy on health outcomes can be measured empirically, and the potential benefit of bringing contemporary mindfulness more in line with traditional practices may be evaluated critically.

5.4 Religious Proselytising in Psychological Treatment

As discussed above, in the early writings about MBSR (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) the references to its Buddhist origins were few and vague, and the MBSR Standards of Practice stipulate that the instructors should exercise great care in introducing and discussing the mindfulness practices "free of the language, belief systems, dogma, and cultural contexts in which they originated" (Santorelli, 2014, p. 8). In later writings, Kabat-Zinn (2005, 2013b) has been noticeably more candid about the extent to which Buddhism forms the foundation of MBSR, even to the point of calling it a skilful means of bringing the Buddha's teachings to the mainstream western setting. This might raise questions about whether MBSR is a form of religious proselytising rather than a scientifically grounded treatment.

The ethical guidelines for psychologists state that the therapist must be attentive and sensitive to individual and cultural differences regarding to (amongst other things) religion (American Psychological Association, 1992; British Psychological Society, 2009; Norsk Psykologforening, 1998). The guidelines for Nordic psychologists also states that psychologist must not pressure others to reveal, deny, or change religious or ethical beliefs,

and actively prevent psychological knowledge to be employed for these ends (Norsk Psykologforening, 1998). These guidelines raises questions regarding how much of the Buddhist teachings that can be used in therapy, and in what ways. The guidelines seem clear-cut, but its implications are not clear-cut, as Buddhism is located in grey areas between religion, philosophy, and psychology, and between science and faith.

Buddhism is usually regarded a religion (*The new encyclopædia Britannica*, 2010), but it has been discussed whether it is more correct to regard it as a philosophy or a psychology (Narada, 1975). The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines religion as "(1) the belief in a god or in a group of gods; (2) an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, and rules used to worship a god or a group of gods; (3) an interest, a belief, or an activity that is very important to a person or group" (*Merriam-Webster*, 2015). The third of these definitions is arguably broad enough to encompass any psychological or scientific orientation as well, or even one's favourite football team. The first two definitions do not seem to fit well with Buddhism. Although faith is recognised as a potent source of motivation for practice in Buddhism, dogmatic belief is not encouraged, but rather investigation and search for the truth (Narada, 1975). Although there are stories about celestial beings (devatās and brahmas) in the Buddhist scriptures, there is no creator-god or god that is the subject of worship or prayer. The devatās and brahmas are said to be part of the same cycle of birth, death, and rebirth as all other living beings, and is one possible mode of rebirth for a human being after death (Bodhi, 2005). Although the Buddhist scriptures talk about what happens after death, the focus of the Buddhist practice is what can be attained in this life, including the final goal – Nibbāna (U Pandita, 1991). Nibbāna, as well as other states attained through Buddhist practice is a result of personal effort and insight, and does not come as a reward bestowed upon the practitioner by a higher being or entity (Narada, 1975). The law of kamma (Sanskrit: karma) is also conceived as a natural law, in which good and bad actions lead to corresponding results. It is

neither created nor administered by some kind of celestial being (Ṭhānissaro, 2002). Finally, The Buddhist teachings are not considered to have originated from a god, neither directly nor transmitted, but from the personal observation, experience, and understanding of a human being (Rahula, 1959). As has been discussed in chapter 3, Buddhism clearly contains a theory and a system describing both mental and behavioural characteristics of people, and offers a path of practice that is psychological in nature, and aims at specific states of mind. It could perhaps be argued that Buddhism is more than the psychological elements; that although it does contain elements that are best described as psychology it also contains elements that are best described as religion.

Regardless of whether Buddhism is better covered by the definition of religion, philosophy, or psychology, people in general consider it to be a religion (*The new encyclopædia Britannica*, 2010). For that reason patients might feel subjected to proselytising rather than therapy if given Buddhist-based treatments. Providing adequate and candid information about the origin of the treatment at the outset, and the nature of that origin could prevent such misunderstandings.

5.5 Limitations and Implications

There are several important limitations in this thesis. Our comparison of MBSR and the Buddhist tradition is based on textual material. There could, however, be significant divergences between how the practice is presented in writing and how it is carried out in practice. Although morality is addressed in indirect ways in the MBSR literature and in the guidelines for conducting MBSR-courses, it is possible that these elements are lost altogether in many MBSR-courses conducted. It can be assumed that the more frequently an element is mentioned, and the more explicitly it is discussed, the greater the possibility for its practical inclusion. However, it is also possible that the course instructors explicitly teach elements only implicitly dealt with in the literature. This thesis cannot answer whether—or to what

degree—such divergences between theory and practice exist in MBSR. A qualitative study could further our understanding of how the themes of ethics and insight are handled in MBSR-courses.

The basis of our discussion of the Buddhist perspective has primarily been material from the Theravāda Pāli Canon. This represents a narrow selection when compared to the existing multitude of Buddhist traditions, later texts, and practices. Earlier in this chapter the authors discussed how the implicit inclusion of morality and insight in MBSR might be closer to the Buddhist tradition (the Zen-tradition in that instance) than what is apparent when comparing to the canonical texts. It is possible that similar additional issues have been missed due to the narrow selection.

As has been argued in this thesis, the Buddhist framework is incorporated deeply into the structure and content of MBSR, some parts explicitly and other parts more implicitly. Although Kabat-Zinn (1994, 2005, 2013b) has been more candid about the Buddhist connection to MBSR in his later writings, the latest version of the MBSR Standards of Practice still encourage distancing the content of the course from the context of which it originated (Santorelli, 2014). If the origin of the MBSR-courses would be plainly communicated to its participants, it would not only give credit where credit is due, but also ensure that participants are given the right to make *informed* decisions regarding their own choice of treatment.

6. Conclusion

In this thesis we have explored the broader Buddhist framework of mindfulness meditation, and further discussed how Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) relates to this framework, with an emphasis on the Buddhist trainings of morality and insight. Furthermore, challenges with implementing aspects of considered of Buddhist origin in to western secular settings have been discussed. Our discussion suggests that the broader

framework underlying mindfulness practice in the Buddhist traditions can also be found in the MBSR literature. The references to the origins of this framework are vague in the early texts, and care is taken to avoid using Buddhist terms when discussing the material. No major component of the fundamental Buddhist framework is left out entirely, but some components are dealt with to a lesser degree, and often more vaguely and implicitly (notably on the theme of morality), and some themes are dealt with in a less confrontational style that what is typical in the Buddhist tradition (notably the themes of the three characteristics, and taṇhā as the cause of dukkha). The references to the Buddhist teachings in the MBSR literature have become more numerous and more explicit as MBSR has gained academic and scientific acceptance, and in Kabat-Zinn's later texts the Buddhist framework–the Four Noble Truths including the Threefold Training–is dealt with explicitly. Kabat-Zinn (2013b) explained that keeping the references to Buddhism vague and avoiding the use of Buddhist terms in the early years of MBSR, was a deliberate choice in order to gain acceptance in the scientific community. These choices might well have been important reasons for the exponential rise in research, application, and interest in mindfulness-based interventions seen in the past 30 years, but it has also sparked debate. MBSR has been criticised on two fronts. The first line of criticism contends that the MBIs has extracted the mindfulness-exercises out of the larger Buddhist context, and neglected important elements such as morality or insight. The second questions whether more Buddhism is being applied in the MBIs than what is being portrayed in the introduction to the programs.

With regards to the first line of criticism, it has been shown that the Buddhist framework is represented to a much larger degree than what might be immediately apparent. All the major components of the Four Noble Truths including the Threefold Training can be found in the design of MBSR, at least in implicit and indirect ways. An important line of enquiry for future research will be to investigate differences between indirect and direct

teaching styles, both with regard to effectiveness and suitability for various groups. A related line of research that also appears to be wanting is an empirical investigation into the effects of ethics and insight on the outcomes of mindfulness-based interventions, regardless of whether it is taught implicitly or explicitly.

The second line of criticism has prompted investigation into the definition of religion, and into the ethical guidelines formulated by the various regulatory bodies for psychological practice. The classification of Buddhism as a religion might be inaccurate, and the incorporation of elements from Buddhist practice does not seem to violate the ethical guidelines for psychologists, granted that the effectiveness of these elements have empirical support. However, the principle of informed consent in healthcare, coupled with the fact that Buddhism is generally viewed as a religion, makes the concealing of the Buddhist framework underlying the mindfulness-based interventions problematic. Such concealment might be conceived by some as deceptive, and could be in conflict with the principle of informed consent in healthcare. Purposefully distancing the MBIs from Buddhism could also impede continued interaction and sharing of experiences, methods, and empirical findings between the two traditions, a collaboration that could prove fruitful for both parties.

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Appendix A – References to the Translations of the Classical Buddhist Texts

Tipiṭaka:	
DN xx.x.xx (sutta.section.verse)	Dīgha Nikāya (Walshe, 1995)
MN xx.x (sutta.verse)	Majjhima Nikāya (Bodhi & Ñāṇamoli, 2009)
SN xx:xx (saṃyutta:sutta)	Saṃyutta Nikāya (Bodhi, 2000)
AN xx:xx (nipāta:sutta)	Aṇguttara Nikāya (Bodhi, 2012)
DhpB xxx (verse)	Dhammapāda (Buddharakkhita, 1996)
DhpT xxx (verse)	Dhammapāda (Ṭhānissaro, 1998)
Iti x:xx (nipata:sutta)	Itivuttaka (Ṭhānissaro, 2001)
Ud x:xx (vagga:sutta)	Udāna (Ṭhānissaro, 2012)
Sn x:xxx (vagga;verse)	Suttanipāta (Norman, 1992)
Th xxx (verse)	Theragāthā (Norman, 1997)
Thī xxx (verse)	Therīgāthā (Davids & Norman, 1989)
Mil xx:xx (chapter:verse)	Milindapañha (Pesala, 1991)
Classical commentaries:	
Vism xxx:xxx (chapter:verse)	Visuddhimagga (Buddhaghosa, 1979)
Vim xx:x (chapter:section)	Vimuttimagga (Upatissa, 1961)

Appendix B – Excerpt from Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Bārāṇasī in the Deer Park at Isipatana. There the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus of the group of five thus:

"Bhikkhus, these two extremes should not be followed by one who has gone forth into homelessness. What two? The pursuit of sensual happiness in sensual pleasures, which is low, vulgar, the way of worldlings, ignoble, unbeneficial; and the pursuit of self-mortification, which is painful, ignoble, unbeneficial. Without veering towards either of these extremes, the Tathāgata has awakened to the middle way, which gives rise to vision, which gives rise to knowledge, which leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

"And what, bhikkhus, is that middle way awakened to by the Tathāgata, which gives rise to vision … which leads to Nibbāna? It is this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This, bhikkhus, is that middle way awakened to by the Tathāgata, which gives rise to vision, which gives rise to knowledge, which leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

"Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering.

"Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the origin of suffering: it is this craving which leads to renewed existence, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, craving for extermination.

"Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering: it is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, nonreliance on it.

"Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering: it is this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view … right concentration.

"'This is the noble truth of suffering': thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

"'This noble truth of suffering is to be fully understood': thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

"'This noble truth of suffering has been fully understood': thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

"'This is the noble truth of the origin of suffering': thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

"'This noble truth of the origin of suffering is to be abandoned': thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

"'This noble truth of the origin of suffering has been abandoned': thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

"'This is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

“‘This noble truth of the cessation of suffering is to be realized’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

“‘This noble truth of the cessation of suffering has been realized’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

“‘This is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

“‘This noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering is to be developed’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

“‘This noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering has been developed’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

“So long, bhikkhus, as my knowledge and vision of these Four Noble Truths as they really are in their three phases and twelve aspects was not thoroughly purified in this way, I did not claim to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world with its devas, Māra, and Brahmā, in this generation with its ascetics and brahmins, its devas and humans. But when my knowledge and vision of these Four Noble Truths as they really are in their three phases and twelve aspects was thoroughly purified in this way, then I claimed to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world with its devas, Māra, and Brahmā, in this generation with its ascetics and brahmins, its devas and humans. The knowledge and vision arose in me: ‘Unshakable is the liberation of my mind. This is my last birth. Now there is no more renewed existence.’”

This is what the Blessed One said. Elated, the bhikkhus of the group of five delighted in the Blessed One's statement. And while this discourse was being spoken, there arose in the Venerable Kondañña the dust-free, stainless vision of the Dhamma: "Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation." (…) Then the Blessed One uttered this inspired utterance: "Koṇḍañña has indeed understood! Koṇḍañña has indeed understood!" In this way the Venerable Koṇḍañña acquired the name "Aññā Koṇḍañña—Koṇḍañña Who Has Understood." (SN 56:11)

Appendix C – Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Bārāṇasī in the Deer Park at Isipatana. There the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus of the group of five thus: “Bhikkhus!”

“Venerable sir!” those bhikkhus replied. The Blessed One said this:

“Bhikkhus, form is nonself. For if, bhikkhus, form were self, this form would not lead to affliction, and it would be possible to have it of form: ‘Let my form be thus; let my form not be thus.’ But because form is nonself, form leads to affliction, and it is not possible to have it of form: ‘Let my form be thus; let my form not be thus.’

“Feeling is nonself…. Perception is nonself…. Volitional formations are nonself…. Consciousness is nonself. For if, bhikkhus, consciousness were self, this consciousness would not lead to affliction, and it would be possible to have it of consciousness: ‘Let my consciousness be thus; let my consciousness not be thus.’ But because consciousness is nonself, consciousness leads to affliction, and it is not possible to have it of consciousness: ‘Let my consciousness be thus; let my consciousness not be thus.’

“What do you think, bhikkhus, is form permanent or impermanent?” - “Impermanent, venerable sir.” - “Is what is impermanent suffering or happiness?” - “Suffering, venerable sir.” - “Is what is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my self’?” - “No, venerable sir.”

“Is feeling permanent or impermanent?… Is perception permanent or impermanent?… Are volitional formations permanent or impermanent?… Is consciousness permanent or impermanent?” - “Impermanent, venerable sir.” - “Is what is impermanent suffering or happiness?” - “Suffering, venerable sir.” - “Is what is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my self’?” - “No, venerable sir.”

"Therefore, bhikkhus, any kind of form whatsoever, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, all form should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.'

"Any kind of feeling whatsoever … Any kind of perception whatsoever … Any kind of volitional formations whatsoever … Any kind of consciousness whatsoever, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, all consciousness should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.'

"Seeing thus, bhikkhus, the instructed noble disciple experiences revulsion towards form, revulsion towards feeling, revulsion towards perception, revulsion towards volitional formations, revulsion towards consciousness. Experiencing revulsion, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion [his mind] is liberated. When it is liberated there comes the knowledge: 'It's liberated.' He understands: 'Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more for this state of being.'"

That is what the Blessed One said. Elated, those bhikkhus delighted in the Blessed One's statement. And while this discourse was being spoken, the minds of the bhikkhus of the group of five were liberated from the taints by nonclinging. (SN 22.59)

Appendix D – Glossary of Terms

from Buddhist Dictionary (Nyanatiloka & Nyanaponika, 1980)

anattā - 'not-self', non-ego, egolessness, impersonality, is the last of the three characteristics of existence. The *anattā* doctrine teaches that neither within the bodily and mental phenomena of existence, nor outside of them, can be found anything that in the ultimate sense could be regarded as a self-existing real ego-entity, soul or any other abiding substance.

anicca - 'impermanent' (or, as abstract noun, *aniccatā*, 'impermanence') is the first of the three characteristics of existence. Impermanence is a basic feature of all conditioned phenomena, be they material or mental, coarse or subtle, one's own or external: All formations are impermanent.

avijjā - 'ignorance,' nescience, unknowing; synonymous with delusion (*moha*), is the primary root of all evil and suffering in the world, veiling man's mental eyes and preventing him from seeing the true nature of things. It is the delusion tricking beings by making life appear to them as permanent, happy, substantial and beautiful and preventing them from seeing that everything in reality is impermanent, liable to suffering, void of 'I' and 'mine', and basically impure. Ignorance is defined as 'not knowing the four truths, namely, suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the way to its cessation'.

bhikkhu - A fully ordained disciple of the Buddha.

dhamma [Sanskrit: dharma] - lit. the 'bearer', constitution (or nature of a thing), norm, law, doctrine; justice, righteousness; quality; thing, object of mind, phenomenon. The Dhamma, as the liberating law discovered and proclaimed by the Buddha, is summed up in the 4 Noble Truths.

dukkha - 'the state of suffering', painfulness, unpleasantness, the unsatisfactoriness of existence. "There are three kinds of suffering: (1) suffering as pain (*dukkha-dukkhatā*), (2) the suffering inherent in the formations (*sankhāra-dukkhatā*), (3) the suffering in change (*vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*)". (1) Is the bodily or mental feeling of pain as actually felt. (2) Refers to the oppressive nature of all formations of existence (i.e. all conditioned phenomena), due to their continual arising and passing away; this includes also experiences associated with neutral feeling. (3) Refers to bodily and mental pleasant feelings, "because they are the cause for the arising of pain when they change".

jhāna - 'absorption' (meditation) refers chiefly to the four meditative absorptions of the fine-material sphere (*rūpa-jjhāna* or *rūpāvacara-jjhāna*). They are achieved through the attainment of full (or attainment-, or ecstatic) concentration (*appanā samadhi*), during which there is a complete, though temporary, suspension of fivefold sense-activity and of the 5 hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). The state of consciousness, however, is one of full alertness and lucidity. This high degree of concentration is generally developed by the practice of one of the 40 subjects of tranquility meditation (*samatha-kammaṭṭhāna*).

Nibbāna - lit. 'extinction'; according to the commentaries, 'freedom from desire'. Nibbāna constitutes the highest and ultimate goal of all Buddhist aspirations, i.e. absolute extinction of that life-affirming will manifested as greed, hate and delusion, and convulsively clinging to existence; and therewith also the ultimate and absolute deliverance from all future rebirth, old age, disease and death, from all suffering and misery.

samādhi - 'concentration'; lit. 'the (mental) state of being firmly fixed', is the fixing of the mind on a single object. Right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*), as the last link of the 8-fold Path, is defined as the 4 meditative absorptions (*jhāna*). In a wider sense, comprising also much weaker states of concentration (…) one distinguishes 3 grades of intensity: (1) 'Preparatory concentration' (*parikamma-samādhi*) existing at the beginning of the mental

exercise. (2) ‘Neighbourhood concentration’ (*upacāra- samādhi*), i.e. concentration ‘approaching’ but not yet attaining the 1st absorption (*jhāna*), which in certain mental exercises is marked by the appearance of the so-called ‘counter-image’ (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*). (3) ‘Attainment concentration’ (*appanā-samādhi*), i.e. that concentration which is present during the absorptions (*jhāna*).

sutta – discourse or sermon.

taṇhā - (lit. ‘thirst’): ‘craving’, is the chief root of suffering, and of the ever-continuing cycle of rebirths. Corresponding to the 6 sense-objects, there are 6 kinds of craving: craving for visible objects, for sounds, odours, tastes, bodily impressions, mental impressions. Corresponding to the 3-fold existence, there are 3 kinds: craving for sensual existence (*kāma-taṇhā*), for fine-material existence (*rūpa-taṇhā*), for immaterial existence (*arūpa-taṇhā*).

Table 1 – The Noble Eightfold Path and the Threefold Training

The Noble Eightfold Path:	The Threefold Training:
1. Right view	3. Wisdom
2. Right intention	
3. Right action	1. Virtue
4. Right speech	
5. Right livelihood	
6. Right effort	2. Meditation
7. Right mindfulness	
8. Right concentration	