

Cultivating Community Engagement: Outline for Learning Circle Introductory Workshop

Workshop Topics: Shamata & Introduction to Tonglen

Materials: journals/paper, pens, blankets, yoga mats, audio for guided meditations, video, "goodie bags" for participants, small post-it's for everyone to write their name on, sign-up sheet for e-mails, copy of *Why Is the Dalai Lama Always Smiling?*

Total Length: 2 hours

Focus on Meditation Building Blocks: posture, eyes, breath, straight spine

Goal from Pre-Workshop Surveys: "Something that will leave me feeling refreshed, but will also provide me with simple skills to take home."

Introduction- 25 min.

- Briefly outline group agreements:
 - Distraction free zone. If there is a need to have a phone available, we ask that the ringer be kept on silent/vibrate.
 - Complete presence – allow yourself to really be here now.
 - Be in beginner's mind. Ask questions!
 - Get to know you: *name, what's one thing you hope to get out of this workshop and one fear/uncertainty?*
- Make sure we share too! To create a circle of energy, not a linear one.
- Begin discussion by asking: What is mindfulness? What is meditation?
- *"To meditate does not mean to fight with a problem. To meditate means to observe."*
- *"Mindfulness is the energy of being aware and awake to the present moment. To be mindful is to be truly alive, present and at one with yourself and what you are doing."*
- Show Headspace videos: 'Changing Perspective' and 'Underlying Calm' approx. 4 min.
- Further discuss meditation and why it's a useful tool? Dialogue about the cars on the road metaphor. Is that what your thoughts feel like in your head sometimes? Cars rushing back and forth. If we all feel like this, what do we

do about it?

- Pass out paper & pens!
- Prompt them to write 3 to 5 words that describe what they are feeling/thinking about before the first meditation & several words after it.

Meditation 1: To Calm the Mind- 20 min.

- Experiment with what posture feels good for your body... Discuss importance of a straight spine and why we keep our eyes open in Shamata. Give people permission to close their eyes or try keeping them open, they choose.
- 5 min. Guided Meditation for Mindfulness of Thinking: www.mindfulnessforteens.com
- Give them several minutes to jot down thoughts after the meditation. Put timer on for these minutes.
- Ask for them to turn to the person next to them and share how they feel now...what felt good, what was challenging?
- Afterwards, address common obstacles & what they might need to adjust for themselves next time.

Discussion/Exercise & Video: 30 min.

- What is Compassion? (Definitions: Compassion: A deep awareness of and sympathy for another's suffering/the humane quality of understanding the suffering of others and wanting to do something about it. Pity: A feeling of sorrow for the misfortunes of others.)
- Where do you struggle with giving or receiving compassion? Is it easy to give compassion to yourself?
- Give them post it notes to answer this: How does compassion show up in your life? Ask them to write down examples- for self and others.
- Invite people to put up their sticky notes on a wall or door so we can reflect on them and read highlights out loud together.

Watch eCourse Week 2: Chapter 1 What is Compassion Practice? [Stop video at](#)

approx. 6:49 min, then jump to 8:40 min to 9:40 min. for explanation of practice, if time allows watch the whole video.

Meditation 2: To Strengthen the Heart- 25 min.

1. Give a few minutes for finding their meditation posture and reconnecting with the breath.
2. Listen to Namchak Guided Meditation #2 for Sending and Receiving Compassion- 7 min.
3. Afterwards, give them several minutes to jot down a few reflections in their journals. Explain Aspiration/Dedication if need be.
4. Invite verbal sharing- turn to the person on your right or...choose another mode of reflection that works for the group.

- **Closing-** 20 min.
- Give a few pointers on how to start a daily practice. Encourage and make space for people to find a meditation buddy. Give them brief guidelines on how to do this.
- What is one thing you will remember from this workshop or what peaked your interest?
- **Meditation Resource Kit:** inspiration cards, eCourse bookmarks, mindfulness dots, [handout with info on guided meditations \(pdf is on resource list\)](#), websites, etc.—offer to give it to them digitally as well for easy use of links: pass sign-up sheet to collect e-mails.

