

Chapter 2

A Genealogy of Mindfulness

The concept of mindfulness has its origins in the Sanskrit word *smṛti* and Pāli *sati*, both of which literally mean “memory” (Monier-Williams, 1872; Rhys Davids & Stede, 1999). *Sati* was one of the many technical terms the Buddha developed to map the process of cultivating a healthy mind. In 1881 T. W. Rhys Davids was the first to provide “mindfulness” as an English translation of *sati*, and by 1910, this had become generally accepted (Gethin, 2011). Over the next century mindfulness gradually became absorbed into the English lexicon, first within Theravāda Buddhism and then throughout the wider secular world. In the course of its adoption by Western culture, the *sati* of the Buddha has evolved into the mindfulness that characterises the contemporary mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) of psychology and related fields.

In this chapter we trace the genealogy of *sati* by first looking at how it is used in the Nikāyas, the early “collections” of the Buddha’s teachings, unpacking its meaning and function through the analysis and imagery found there. We will then see how the concept of *sati* has evolved through the twentieth century to become the mindfulness of the contemporary MBIs. This will create a platform for presenting the understanding and application of mindfulness found in the current project as constituting a creative adaptation of this ancient concept, bringing it to individuals and families living with developmental disabilities.

2.1 Sati in the Nikāyas

Mindfulness is the product of an ancient tradition of phenomenology that takes a first-person approach to the systematic analysis of human development and the cultivation of a range of conscious states that are beyond anything normally considered by Western psychology (Grossman, 2010). In order to appreciate the underpinnings of this tradition, it is essential to return to the classical literature that elucidated the concept to generations of scholars and practitioners. This will

provide a platform that allows a clear view of the relationship between the classical concept of *sati* and its modern incarnation as mindfulness.

Bhikkhu Bodhi points out that *sati*, while literally meaning memory, “signifies presence of mind, attentiveness to the present, rather than the faculty of memory regarding the past” (Bodhi, 2000b, p. 86). *Sati* as memory does not refer to memory in the ordinary sense of remembering the past; rather, *sati* remembers the present, by keeping the present in mind. We find the same concept presented in the exhortations at railway stations to “mind the gap” when stepping between a train and the platform. Minding the gap here means remembering the act of entering and exiting a train during the actual moment of transit. Mindfulness practice is remembering to stay present. It is the art of not forgetting, and entails tracking both awareness and the object of awareness over time.

When we look at how *sati* is treated in the Nikāyas we find that the establishment of *sati* indicates the beginning of formal meditation practice. In a frequently repeated refrain, the practitioner “sits down, crosses her legs, straightens her back and establishes *sati* directly [*parimukham satim upatthapetvā*]”¹ (Mahā-Satipatthāna Sutta *Larger establishments of mindfulness*, DN 22; Satipatthāna Sutta *The establishments of mindfulness*, MN 10). The verb associated with *sati* is *upatthahati*, derived from the prefix *upa-*, denoting nearness or close touch, and the root *sthā*, to stand or station. *Upatthahati* conveys meanings such as standing near and staying present (Gethin, 2001; Thera, 1969). Rupert Gethin comments:

The regular Nikāya expression *satim upatthapetvā* means ... “causing mindfulness to stand near,” “causing mindfulness to be present” or even “causing mindfulness to come into service.” ... What is meant ... is that *sati* is understood as a quality of mind that “stands near” or “serves” the mind; it watches over the mind. One might say that it is a form of “presence of mind” (Gethin, 2001, p. 32).

The use of the root *sthā* suggests a firm grounding or stationing of the mind, which is elaborated in the metaphors the Buddha uses to speak of *sati*. He compares *sati* to a large post planted firmly in the earth to which a wild elephant is tied. No matter how much he struggles, the elephant cannot escape past the length of rope that ties him to the post, and eventually he gives up his wild behaviour and calms down (Dantabhūmi Sutta *The grade of the tamed*, MN 125).

The function of *sati* is to ground and stabilise the mind. This is further emphasised when the practitioner is described as establishing *sati* “directly”, using the adverb *parimukham*. This can be read as “completely (*pari*) facing (*mukha*)” (Rhys Davids & Stede, 1999) the meditation object, establishing a face-to-face encounter with it. Describing the practitioner as “establishing *sati* directly” conveys a firmness and directness in her engagement with the object of experience. This analysis agrees with the understanding of the later Theravāda, where Buddhaghosa (Warren & Kosambi, 1989, XIV, 141), representing the developed orthodoxy, comments that mindfulness appears as confronting an object, like a pillar “firmly planted [*daḥam patitthitā*]”.

In directly confronting present experience, *sati* calms the senses. The Buddha relates how six wild animals of different species are caught and tied together. The

¹ Note that all translations are from the second author, unless otherwise stated.

animals represent the six sense fields (*saḷāyatana*) of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and “minding”. As with the senses, each animal has its own natural habitat, and they pull in different directions as they strive to return to their familiar territory. At any given moment, the strongest among them dominates (Chappāṇakopama Sutta *Simile of the six animals*, SN 35:247). This image presents the Buddha’s understanding of the normal human relationship to sense experience as a perpetual battle between competing drives where the drive that is strongest at any given time wins, until replaced by the next.

Because *sati* is absent or weak, the animals have no central coherence. In contrast, when the six animals are all tied to “a strong pillar or post” then like the elephant their struggle is limited to the length of their rope and eventually they surrender and lie down. The pillar or post here represents mindfulness immersed in body (*kāyagatā sati*).

The Buddha’s choice of words and metaphors indicate that *sati* has a grounded, earthy quality and is associated with the project of stabilising and steadying the mind. With this steadiness, *sati* can watch over, guard and protect the mind. For as well as confronting a sense object, *sati* also guards the practitioner like a “gatekeeper” (*dovārika*) (Warren & Kosambi, 1989, XIV, 141), as illustrated in the following discourse.

Suppose, bhikkhu, a king had a frontier city with strong ramparts, walls and arches, and with six gates. The gatekeeper posted there would be wise, experienced, and intelligent; one who keeps out strangers and admits acquaintances (Kimsuka Sutta *The What’s-it tree*, SN 35:245).

The Buddha explains that the city is the body, the gatekeeper is *sati*, and the six gates are the six internal sense fields made up of the sensitivities of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. Awareness or consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is the lord of the city. The city is exposed to, and communicates with, the outside world of the six external sense fields of forms, sounds, odours, tastes, tangibles and phenomena known by the mind. The gatekeeper mediates between the city and the world, checking the flow of traffic as it enters and leaves.

This gatekeeper is described as wise, experienced and intelligent. His job is twofold. First, it is to refuse entrance to the *aññata*, the “unknown”, strangers or even enemies. Second, it is to usher in the *ñāta*, the “known”, acquaintances, or even friends (Rhys Davids & Stede, 1999). *Sati* here is associated with wisdom, experience and intelligence. *Sati* actively assesses whoever is at the gate, admitting some and refusing others. This assessment entails recognition, or learning from experience over time, for it takes time for *sati* to learn to discern between enemies and friends. It is the steadiness of *sati* that enables it to maintain a continuous watch over the sense gates, and this continuity enables learning to take place. As gatekeeper, *sati* does not simply observe, but observes with discrimination. Discrimination provides the link between *sati* and understanding (*paññā*), and qualities such as recognition and discrimination require an ongoing relationship with the object of experience. This relationship returns us to the role of memory in the functioning of *sati*.

Buddhaghosa (Warren & Kosambi, 1989, XIV, 141) explains *sati* as remembering itself. “By it they remember [*saranti*], or it itself remembers [*sayam sarati*], or it is simply remembering [*saraṇa-mattam*], therefore it is *sati*”. Grossman and Van Dam (2011) point out the contrast between seeing mindfulness as process, which is normative for the Buddhist tradition, and that of modern psychology, where mindfulness is seen as a relatively stable trait.

How does it make sense to speak of remembering the present? While we tend to conceive of the present as a moment, perhaps because of our ability to measure time so precisely, the Buddha had a broader, more empirical sense of the present. The present that *sati* remembers is the experienced present, not the momentary present of the clock. For the Buddha, the present is experienced as “change while continuing” (*thitassa aññathatta*) (Ānanda Sutta To Ānanda, SN 22.37), a continuously unfolding duration. The present unfolds more as a field than a moment. Although momentary events come and go, the mind remains grounded on the broader activity within which we are currently engaged.

Take as an example mindfulness of driving. We are mindful when we remember *that* we are driving and *how* we are driving. This requires awareness to remain grounded on the act of driving itself. The felt sense of the continuity of driving may include many instances when awareness momentarily slips away, but the mind remembers to return without disruption to the sensed flow of the activity. When we are not mindful, however, when awareness is divided between driving and day-dreaming, then we have periods when we forget we are driving and arrive at our destination without any firm memory of what happened during our journey; or we simply get lost. The experience is patchy rather than smooth, discontinuous rather than continuous.

When the Buddha speaks of lapses in mindfulness, the term he uses is “*mutṭha-sati*”, or forgotten mindfulness (Bhayabherava Sutta *Fear and dread*, MN 4). *Mutṭha* is derived from the verb *mussati*, “to forget”, “to pass into oblivion” (Rhys Davids & Stede, 1999), so the opposite of *sati* is oblivion, and specifically the oblivion that comes from forgetting.

For example, if we are packing to go somewhere and rehearsing in our minds what to bring, we are shocked when we arrive and realise that we have forgotten to pack an item we clearly saw and knew we had to bring. What happened? As we rehearsed what we needed to bring with us we experienced a moment of clarity in which we knew we had to pack that particular item, but when awareness moved to the next item the previous one was immediately forgotten. *Sati* was weak, and the object of present experience was quickly forgotten.

Dreyfus (2011, p. 47) follows this line of analysis when he links *sati* to working memory, “the capacity of the mind to maintain and manipulate relevant information so as to be able to engage in purposeful activities”. Only when information is retained over time—remembered—can it become understanding. Dreyfus (2011, p. 46) uses a visual perception as an example, explaining that we do not just see discrete “time slices” of an object, but perceive a single person moving from one place to another. Each time slice takes but a moment, while movement from one place to another unfolds through an extended present.

Remembering enables *sati* to monitor experience over time and so guard the senses. This function of *sati* reminds us of its characteristic of groundedness, of being firmly planted on the object. When awareness lands only lightly on an object—as in our example of quickly rehearsing what we need to bring with us—then it leaves no imprint in the mind and is quickly forgotten. When awareness is firmly planted on something, then the object is sufficiently impressed on the mind to allow it to remain available to working memory.

Sati as memory also reveals why the Buddha associated *sati* with wisdom (*paññā*). When we are present to experience over time, when we *remember* present experience, then understanding has the opportunity to arise. The Buddha closely associates *sati* with *sampajañña*, “clear comprehension” (Bodhi, 2000a, p. 2023) or clear understanding, and he often uses the compound term *sati-sampajañña* to convey how similar they are and how closely they work together. Derived from the verb *pajānāti*, “to know”, “to understand” (Rhys Davids & Stede, 1999), and the prefix *sam-*, here acting as an intensifier, *sampajañña* conveys the capacity to understand the flow of presently experienced phenomena. This understanding ranges from the basic to the sophisticated. An example of a basic level of *sampajañña* would be how a practitioner practising mindfulness of breathing understands whether or not any given breath is long or short. An example of a sophisticated level would be how the same practitioner understands the workings of the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) that characterise an unhealthy mind and the factors of awakening (*bojjhaṅga*) that characterise a healthy mind (Anālayo, 2006). *Sati* remembers to be present, and could be understood as the continuity of presence itself. *Sampajañña* monitors what is remembered as present. *Sampajañña* can be seen as the intelligence implicit in presence, and the compound *sati-sampajañña* could be translated as “intelligent presence”.

With this theoretical background, we can approach the two operational definitions of *sati* provided by the Buddha in the Nikāyas. Both are descriptions of practitioners of *sati*. Sekha Sutta (*The trainee*, MN 53) says of the practitioner:

He has *sati*; possessing supreme *sati* and discrimination [*nepakka*] he can recall and recollect what was done and said long ago.

Here *sati* is linked with memory, along with wisdom in the form of discrimination. *Sati* facilitates memory, in that memory of the past is influenced by the strength of attention to the present. The second definition grounds *sati* on its systematic practice, that of *satipaṭṭhāna*, as outlined in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (*The establishments of mindfulness*, MN 10):

Here a practitioner, surrendering longing and sorrow for the world, lives tracking body as body, ... feeling as feeling ... heart-mind as heart-mind ... phenomena as phenomena, ardent, clearly understanding and mindful.

This definition takes us to *satipaṭṭhāna*, the practice of mindfulness. The essence of *satipaṭṭhāna* is the practice of tracking experience over time. This practice ties in with *sati* as memory, because tracking something over time requires that we remember to be present to it, maintaining that awareness over time. This understanding ties in with *sati* as guarding the mind, for by maintaining awareness of

the flow of experience over time the practitioner learns what aspects of experience should be encouraged and what aspects discouraged. It ties in with wisdom, for when we continuously follow the flow of experienced phenomena we learn to understand them, and the patterns within which they reveal themselves. With this background in mind we can now look at how in the twentieth century the *sati* of the Nikāyas became the mindfulness of the psychologists.

2.2 Mindfulness in the Modern World

We have seen that by 1910 “mindfulness” had become the settled translation of *sati* (Gethin, 2011). The concept was popularised through the work of Nyanaponika Thera (1901–1994), a German scholar monk who was a student of the Burmese meditation master Mahāsī Sayādaw (1904–1982). Nyanaponika Thera worked within the context of the modern Burmese insight movement, a revival of meditation practice that aimed to take meditation out of the monasteries and spread it throughout the general population, in Burma and beyond. This movement began in the mid-nineteenth century and developed throughout the twentieth century, and Mahāsī Sayādaw, U Ba Khin (1899–1971) and S. N. Goenka (1924–2013) were central figures in it. They, along with other teachers, made meditation practice accessible to a mass audience by delivering it through standardised methods that could be practised by ordinary people with the aid of appropriately trained teachers. It could be said that the modern Burmese insight movement democratised Buddhist meditation practice, in that within traditional Buddhist societies it became available to a degree previously unknown, and internationalised it, in that the same methods were applied across cultures (Houtman, 1990, 1999; Jordt, 2007; Kearney, 2011). Textual justification for this understanding of meditation practice was drawn primarily from the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (*The establishments of mindfulness*, MN 10), now seen as propounding insight meditation (Gethin, 2011).

Nyanaponika Thera was part of this project of internationalising Buddhist meditation. In his *The heart of Buddhist meditation*, first published in English in 1954, Nyanaponika Thera (1969) presented mindfulness and its practice as the essence of the Buddha’s way to liberation, and as available to the general population regardless of whether or not they were Buddhists (Thera, 1969, 1972). He made clear that his purpose was to present mindfulness in its role as right mindfulness, where it functions as an inseparable aspect of the broader system that is the Buddha’s noble eightfold path. As such, mindfulness is necessarily accompanied and supported by the other seven path factors, which in practical terms means that, when practised correctly, mindfulness is accompanied and supported by other qualities such as calmness, receptivity and kindness (Thera, 1969). In presenting what he called “satipaṭṭhāna dhamma for all” (Thera, 1969, p. 9), Nyanaponika Thera proclaimed mindfulness practice to be suitable for people of all cultures, including those with no particular religious affiliation. In this he was aligned with the evangelical mission of the modern Burmese insight movement, in its project to laicise and internationalise Buddhist meditation.

Perhaps the aspect of mindfulness that most captured the notice of his readership was his presentation of it as “bare attention”, a mode of attention that he claimed strips the mind of its habitual judgements and projections regarding the object of experience (Gethin, 2011; Thera, 1969, 1972). This concept communicates the central aspect of Mahāsi Sayādaw’s approach to meditation practice, which is to “note”, or be directly and deliberately aware of, any experienced event as simply another meditation object. This includes any thoughts or feelings that arise in relation to the experienced event. These too are just objects to be noted (Mahasi, 1971). As Nyanaponika Thera explained:

Bare Attention is the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us, at the successive moments of perception. It is called “bare,” because it attends just to the bare facts of a perception as presented either through the five physical senses or through the mind ... without reacting to them by deed, speech or by mental comment ... If ... any such comments arise in one’s mind, they themselves are made objects of Bare Attention ... (Thera, 1969, p. 30).

This was the understanding of mindfulness that was received and elaborated by newly established meditation teachers such as Joseph Goldstein (1976, 2002) and Jack Kornfield (1993) who were formative influences in the creation of modern North American Buddhism (McMahan, 2008). It was this lineage that shaped Jon Kabat-Zinn’s understanding of mindfulness when he developed his new stress reduction programme in the late 1970s (Gethin, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 2011). Kabat-Zinn borrowed directly from Nyanaponika Thera when he referred to mindfulness as “the heart of Buddhist meditation” (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p. 12), and his project to bring mindfulness to a secular, non-Buddhist audience was the same as that of Nyanaponika Thera and the modern Burmese insight movement.

When Nyanaponika Thera explained mindfulness as a path factor, necessarily accompanied and supported by other path factors, he drew upon his traditional understanding of the Buddha’s theoretical framework, that of dependent arising (Kalupahana, 1975). In this paradigm, reality is analysed in terms of experienced events rather than of entities, events that arise, function and cease in dependence upon other experienced events. As in Buddhaghosa’s analysis of mindfulness above, what appear to be stable, independently existing things turn out, upon analysis, to be dynamic processes. The events that emerge from these processes are distinguished from each other through their characteristics and the conditional relationships that give rise to them. For mindfulness to be mindfulness, therefore, it must have certain characteristics that distinguish it from other phenomena, *and* it must be embedded within a particular network of relationships with these other phenomena. Mindfulness, like other phenomena within this network, is never alone. One could even say that mindfulness alone does not exist; it exists only as part of a broader phenomenal network.

As the practice of mindfulness transitioned to modern, secular contexts, the original theoretical context of its practice transitioned into new ways of understanding it, where mindfulness was not so much seen as accompanied and conditioned by other qualities such as kindness and receptivity but as *containing* these other qualities. Mindfulness could be seen as standing alone, as the container of the different qualities traditionally associated with it. In brief, mindfulness has tended to become a collective rather than a unitary term.

We can see this shift illustrated in a representative definition of mindfulness as understood in the context of the contemporary MBIs. Kabat-Zinn has defined mindfulness as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145). This definition presents mindfulness as a collective term that entails at least four aspects, those of awareness, attention, intentionality and a particular kind of attitude. In this understanding mindfulness is not associated with these phenomena, but contains them.

The significance of this distinction will be outlined below, as we survey how mindfulness has entered into the contemporary MBIs. We will begin with Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), the program that could be seen as transitioning the understanding of *sati* mediated by the modern insight movement into the social sciences, and from there look at Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT).

2.3 Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

MBSR is perhaps the most influential mindfulness-based programme in the contemporary world, and it continues to provide a model for other mindfulness-based interventions. In the 1970s its founder, Jon Kabat-Zinn, was a practitioner of Korean Seon Buddhism and Theravāda mindfulness meditation as taught at the Insight Meditation Society (IMS) in Barre Massachusetts, who also practised and taught yoga (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). During a meditation retreat in 1979 he was inspired to share what he had learnt of these practices to people who would ordinarily never enter a yoga or meditation centre (Kabat-Zinn, 2011). He created a Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center to teach mindfulness meditation to medical patients who were not being adequately served by conventional treatments. Given the scientific and secular context within which he was operating, he felt he needed to strip meditation of “the cultural, religious, and ideological factors associated with the Buddhist origins of mindfulness” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 149). If this approach was successful, mindfulness meditation could then be extended to a range of other settings (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

How can mindfulness practice be divorced from its Buddhist origins yet remain authentic in its expression? Like other teachers in North American Buddhism, Kabat-Zinn located his understanding of mindfulness in the traditional Indian concept of “dharma” as the expression of a universal truth that transcends traditional religious boundaries (e.g. Kornfield, 1993). This approach drew upon Nyanaponika Thera’s aspiration that “satipaṭṭhāna dhamma for all” would ultimately spread beyond the boundaries of Buddhism itself (Thera, 1969, p. 9), which in turn was characteristic of the modern Burmese insight movement. This turn towards mindfulness meditation as the expression of a universalist ethos, therefore, can be traced back to at least the mid-nineteenth century.

Needing a distinctive brand name for his program, Kabat-Zinn settled upon Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (Kabat-Zinn, 2011), where he used “mindfulness” as a concept that could function as “an umbrella term broad enough to contain the multiplicity of key elements that seems essential to field a successful clinical programme” (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 288). The programme itself was carefully constructed on a practice of sitting and walking meditation supported by yoga. Meditation techniques included mindfulness of breathing and body scan, or systematically scanning the body with awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). This style of meditation practice is easily recognisable as essentially the same as that taught in the contemporary American insight movement (e.g., Goldstein, 1976).

In presenting mindfulness and its practice, Kabat-Zinn provided both an operational definition of how mindfulness worked, around which he organised the practical instructions he gave to his patients, and a broader theoretical framework or paradigm (1990, pp. 149–50) that could show what mindfulness was and how it fitted into a coherent view of the world.

We have already seen one representative definition of mindfulness practice that Kabat-Zinn provided as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment” (2003, p. 145). We have noted that this is an operational definition that presents mindfulness as a collective term containing within it at least four aspects, those of awareness, attention, intentionality and a particular kind of attitude. This definition provides both the “what” and the “how” of mindfulness. The “what” aspect provides the identity of mindfulness, while the “how” provides its function. Here, the identity of mindfulness is the awareness that emerges from a specific process, and its function is the cultivation of purposive attention to the unfolding of experience, in the present, and without judgement.

We have seen that the Buddha took a similar approach in his operational definitions of mindfulness. One difference to be noted is the slide in Kabat-Zinn’s definition from seeing mindfulness as a unitary term supported by other qualities to a collective term containing other qualities. Another distinction is that the Buddha is even less concerned with identity and more concerned with function. In his satipaṭṭhāna definition cited above, the Buddha simply describes how mindfulness is practised: “surrendering longing and sorrow for the world, [the practitioner] lives tracking body as body, ... feeling as feeling ... heart-mind as heart-mind ... phenomena as phenomena, ardent, clearly understanding and mindful” (Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta *The establishments of mindfulness*, DN 22 & MN 10). Here, mindfulness is defined as a practice of tracking experience over time in a certain way (conveyed by “body as body ... heart-mind as heart-mind”), supported by ardency, clear understanding and mindfulness itself. In the satipaṭṭhāna definition, mindfulness remains a unitary construct within a more general practice, although the Buddha here does not attempt to define that construct. When Buddhaghosa focuses on the nature of mindfulness itself, he also emphasises function over identity when he defines mindfulness as “simply remembering” (Warren and Kosambi, 1989, XIV, 141). Mindfulness, which as we have seen literally means memory, is the activity of “simply remembering”. For the Buddha and the tradition he founded, identity ultimately *is* function.

All these operational definitions are embedded within and receive their meaning from a theoretical framework; and in all these examples, the framework is dharma. In constructing his own presentation of dharma, Kabat-Zinn could draw upon the universalism and eclecticism that already characterised North American Buddhism (McMahan, 2008). He presented dharma as a universal grammar that provides a phenomenological analysis of the nature of human experience (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). He saw wholeness and connectedness as fundamental to understanding the workings of the body and mind, and even the universe itself, and drew upon both science and traditional forms of Buddhist and non-Buddhist dharma as his authorities (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). All this constituted an attempt to allow the theoretical framework of mindfulness to fit into a secular context so it could be accepted by a wide variety of people without conflicting with the ideological commitments they already possessed.

2.4 Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy

Segal, Williams and Teasdale (2002) mark the beginnings of cognitive therapy in the work of Aaron T. Beck in the 1960s and 1970s. It had been commonly assumed that negative thinking characterising depression was only an effect of an underlying cause and not itself a cause of depression, and Beck realised this assumption is wrong; negative thinking is as much a cause as an effect. He therefore encouraged his patients to become aware of their patterns of thinking. Segal et al. (2002) subsequently concluded that what was central in this process of cultivating awareness of one's thinking was not the content of negative thoughts, but one's relationship to these thoughts. It was therefore important to change the relationship patients had to negative thoughts and feelings, so they could learn to see them as simply "passing events in the mind that were neither necessarily valid reflections of reality nor central aspects of the self" (p. 38).

This bears a marked similarity with the Buddha's understanding of the causal nature of the relationships between thoughts and feelings (e.g. *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta The sweet essence*, MN18) and the importance of the practice of mindfulness of thoughts and feelings. It is therefore not surprising that when Segal, Williams and Teasdale discovered Jon Kabat-Zinn's mindfulness programme, they quickly appreciated how useful it could be as a pragmatic tool in their own work, to reveal the psychological patterns they wanted their patients to appreciate.

Since this kind of practice was unknown in cognitive therapy, Segal et al. (2002) simply adopted Kabat-Zinn's operational definition of mindfulness along with the theoretical framework within which it was embedded. For example, Segal et al. (2002) borrowed Kabat-Zinn's distinction between "doing mode" and "being mode". Mindfulness allows patients "to become more aware of their mode of mind ('mental gear') at any moment, and the skills to disengage, if they choose, from unhelpful modes of mind and to engage more helpful modes" (Segal et al., 2002, p. 70). Doing mode, characterised by a struggle to escape habitual negative patterns of mind and emotions through obsessive thinking, is unhelpful. Being mode, characterised by accepting present circumstances and experiencing them directly,

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