Education for Sustainable Consumption through Mindfulness

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Toolkit 9 in the Images and Objects – Active Methodology Toolkit series

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Content

Mindfulness and education for sustainable consumption: an introduction 2

Mindfulness: some fundamental considerations 6

1 **Module 1: Personal dimension** 10
- Bodyscan 12
- Self-compassion 13
- Meditation on meeting needs 16
- Satisfaction, dissatisfaction and material wealth 18
- Goods and minimalistic lifestyles 19
- Mindful writing 20
- Contentment and misfortune 21

2 **Module 2: Social dimension** 22
- Mindful dialogue 24
- Compassion 25
- Jeans journey 26
- Clothes check 28
- Moments of happiness 29
- Mindful meal 30
- Act now 31

3 **Module 3: Ecological Dimension** 32
- Ecological breathing space 34
- Tangerine exercise 35
- Ecological footprint 38
- Choosing images 39
- Mindful walk 40

Evaluation 42

References 44

**"Spend money you don't have,
to buy things you don't need,
to impress people you don't like."**

Attributed to Walter Slezak

Mindfulness and education for sustainable consumption: an introduction

Consumption refers to a concrete everyday practice. Consumption is also a complex concept that arouses mixed feelings in many people: we consume to satisfy our basic needs and to enjoy consumer goods and services. At the same time, there is a growing awareness of the dark side of consumption, which is a driver of environmental degradation and a cause of global inequities. Consumption has become a central organisational principle in many societies today. Sociologists today speak of consumer societies in order to illustrate the central role of consumption as a principle for organising the distribution of resources and the satisfaction of our needs and desires as human beings. However, there are many indications that more consumption per se does not lead to greater satisfaction and better quality of life. In a world where consumption plays a very important role in all areas of society and drives the economy, the political system, advertising and the mass media, changing consumption patterns remains very difficult.

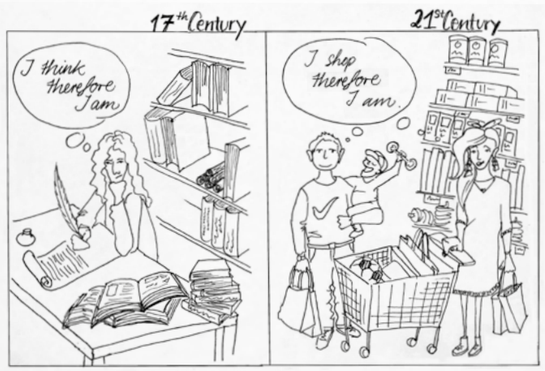


Illustration after Council of Europe (2008), p. 16

What kind of consumption can do us and our planet good? To what extent are body, mind and heart involved in our consumption decisions? What are some alternatives to consumption in order to satisfy our needs in such a way that they can be satisfied just as well or even better? These are questions we don't usually ask ourselves when we go shopping. Many of our daily consumer activities are routines and habits. Questioning them and establishing alternatives requires that we interrupt our automatic patterns and habits and explore what we want, what is good for us and how we want to deal with others and the surrounding environment. Opening up opportunities to develop new attitudes and behaviours in this regard is a major challenge for educators working to promote sustainable consumption and responsible lifestyles.

What does sustainability mean?

Sustainability has become a guiding principle that characterizes a global state in which all people can satisfy their needs without endangering other people's ability to satisfy their needs today and in the future. This also includes responsibility for the environment and the management of our planet's resources so that they can satisfy peoples' needs in the long term (WCED, 1987).

At its core, therefore, the idea of sustainability is always linked to an ethos of care: "For oneself, for one another (across cultures, distances and generations) and for the environment (far and nearby)" (UK Department for Education and Skills, 2008, p. 4).

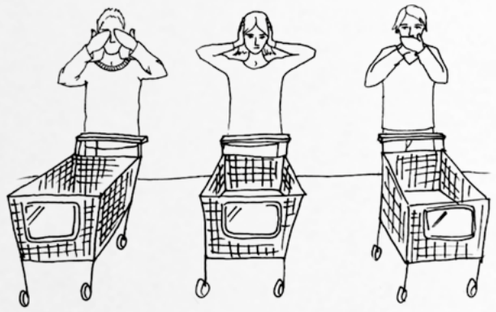
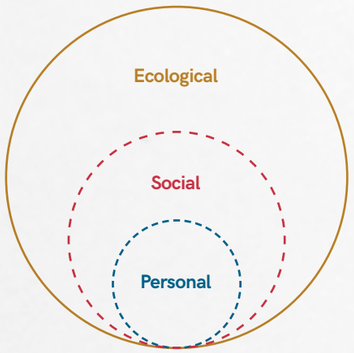


Illustration after Council of Europe (2008), p. 77

The combination of mindfulness and education for sustainable consumption can be a helpful approach to partially meet this challenge. Mindfulness is derived from principles of Buddhist psychology and has no religious or esoteric origin. It is about making ourselves aware of our experiences – in an open manner – as they unfold from moment to moment (Grossman, 2015; Böhme et al., 2016). Mindfulness focuses on cultivating a greater awareness of experience that is integral to values, attitudes and actions of benevolence and goodness towards oneself, others and the world. Mindfulness has attracted a lot of attention in the last ten years, especially in the area of health care. The exercises in this toolkit derive from a three-year research project that investigated to what extent mindful practices and philosophy may contribute to education for sustainable consumption ("BiNKA project", see side column on p. 5). The toolkit offers a variety of ideas and suggestions for teachers, trainers and other pedagogical professionals who want to experience and try mindfulness exercises together with those they teach or train.

The first major mindfulness training program, as well as the most widespread and most intensively evaluated one, is Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). Jon Kabat-Zinn at the Center for Medicine, Health Care and Society at Massachusetts University Medical School developed the program in 1979, originally for the treatment of seriously ill patients. It consists of an 8-week group course with weekly sessions of 2.5 hours and an additional all-day session. Personal motivation, commitment and practice at home are important components of the program, which includes various formal mindfulness exercises, mindful yoga and informal mindfulness exercises in daily life (Kabat-Zinn, 1991). The structure and curriculum of the MBSR training served as a template and basis for the development of the consumption-specific mindfulness training in the BiNKA project (see Stanszus et al., 2017, for a detailed description of the BiNKA training program).

This toolkit is based both on the BiNKA curriculum and on the experience gained in the development and implementation of the BiNKA program. Specifically, selected educational activities to promote sustainable consumption and responsible lifestyles identified as mindful or congruent with the training have been adapted and included (see Fischer, 2016, for a comprehensive collection of educational formats). It can therefore best be understood as a mixture of (1) selected elements and activities of the BiNKA training program and (2) new ideas and inspirations resulting from the reflection and evaluation of the program. As such, this toolkit is a working document and an experiment in itself.



The different facets of mindfulness need a lot of time to mature for individuals interested in developing it: Cultivating mindfulness is a challenge, and substantial personal experience is usually seen as an important prerequisite for teaching others. Learning mindfulness by reading a text or book is rife with a number of difficulties. Therefore, this toolkit can best be understood as a series of exercises that can and should serve as impulses for further deepening of experiences with mindfulness. If you are inspired to use certain exercises in this toolkit, please familiarize yourself with them first and make sure that they have proven valuable to you before introducing them to others. The authors would be very pleased to receive any feedback from those who donned up using the toolkit (**see: http://ifan-berlin.de/mindfulness-and-consumption**).

The toolkit is divided into three modules. The order of the modules reflects an expanding movement from the personal to the social to a broader ecological dimension. However, the modules can be approached independently of one another and, therefore, do not necessarily have to be completed one after the other: Each module stands by itself and consists of an introduction to the module topic and different types of exercises. The introduction is primarily intended to provide the teacher with some

background information and connections. Of course, the introductory text can also be used in the class. The first type of exercises are mindfulness meditation exercises, and you will find detailed instructions that you can directly use in your pedagogical practice. The meditations also include reflections and group discussions. The second type comprises learning tasks in the context of education for sustainable consumption. The exercises are derived from the already mentioned compilation of pedagogical formats. It is important to note that the exercises of the first and second type of exercises differ in several ways: Mindfulness exercises are more oriented towards open exploration and awareness, while learning tasks are more didactically oriented towards the development of certain competencies. Both approaches can fundamentally be understood as complementary and not competing with each other: the mindfulness exercises offer an experience-based approach on which the more analytically oriented tasks of the second type can build upon. Finally, the third type of exercise aims to transfer the lessons learned in the classroom into everyday life and to encourage learners to develop new perspectives for everyday consumption. This toolkit contains a total of 19 exercises.

The BiNKA project funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) between 2015 and 2018 investigated the relationship between mindfulness and sustainable consumption in an intervention study.

The BiNKA intervention study showed little significant overall results for the direct effects of consumer-specific mindfulness training on sustainable consumption behaviour. However, there are indications that the BiNKA training can stimulate changes in other dimensions of attitudes related to consumer behaviour, such as problem awareness, reflection on problematic consequences of one's own unsustainable consumer behaviour and orientation toward materialistic values. Further information and access to background material and research results can be found at http://www.mindfulness-and-consumption.de/.

	Meditation *	Learning tasks	In everyday life
1 Personal dimension	Bodyscan Self-compassion Meditation about meeting needs	Satisfaction, dissatisfaction and material wealth Goods and minimalistic lifestyles	Mindful Writing Contentment and misfortune
2 Social dimension	Mindful dialogue Compassion Jeans journey	Clothes check Moments of happiness	Mindful meal Act now
3 Ecological dimension	Ecological breathing space Tangerine exercise	Ecological footprint Choosing images	Mindful walk

* For each meditation exercise you will find on the Internet at **http://ifan-berlin.de/mindfulness-and-consumption** the corresponding audio file

Illustration after http://www.mindfulnessforschools.com/images/breath-mind-sitting.jpg

Mindfulness: Some fundamental considerations

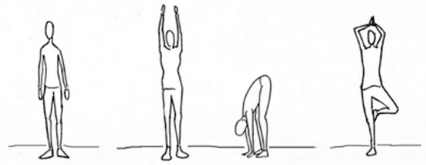
Teaching mindfulness in the pedagogical context is very different from teaching in the usual school or academic context. As with all learning, it is important to create a safe environment in which learners can explore their own experiences in the world. However, it is important that the teacher – as well and as genuinely as possible – strives for the fundamental values of mindfulness such as openness, empathy, patience and benevolence. Before one's own beginning to teach, one should first develop an experience-based understanding of the topic through personal mindfulness practice. Only through regular practice can the teacher share basic intentions and attitudes about consciousness, kindness and goodwill together with the learner – attitudes that may characterize the most important dimensions of mindfulness in relation to sustainable consumption. This is a big task, of course, and it must be emphasized that the cultivation of these qualities is a slow and gradual process for both the students and the teacher, for which intention often plays a greater role than the result.

General preliminary note to the toolkit:

The toolkit provides teachers with instructions for various mindfulness exercises that they can use. All instructions are also available as additional material at **http://ifan-berlin.de/mindfulness-and-consumption** in the form of audio files spoken by a mindfulness teacher. If you wish not to use the audio instructions, we recommend that you practice the instruction texts in the toolkit yourself, alone, for some time, then find your own words to convey the essential contents of the exercise.

Preparations:

Ideally, the teacher should take some time to practice his or her own mindfulness meditation before class. A comfortable and relatively quiet environment is helpful for an introduction to mindfulness. This makes it easier for learners to follow the exercises. Sitting in a circle can create a pleasant environment if the space is available and the group is not too large. Comfortable chairs that support an upright sitting position, as well as meditation cushions and yoga mats are suitable; depending on the exercise, the participants can also lie on the floor on a comfortable mat or blanket. However, each participant should have the choice of what is most comfortable for him or her.



Mindfulness meditation:

Mindfulness is a practice and an experience, not a concept! Theoretical explanations of mindfulness should be reduced to a minimum and based on the personal experience of the teacher. Emphasis should be on promoting clarity of the mindfulness exercise to be practised and on developing a sincere and caring relationship between the teacher and learners. This will have a positive effect on everyone's motivation. Moments of shared silence can also be helpful, in which the teacher supports mindful awareness with the group without having to fill the gap with content.

It is important to create a friendly and open atmosphere. Participants must be informed that all personal information remains in the group. Participants should also be encouraged to abandon any exercise that feels too challenging or that they simply do not want to do and sit quietly if possible, but also to leave the room if ever necessary. Such behaviour should not lead to coercion or restrictions. When teaching formal mindfulness exercises, it is important that teachers briefly describe the practice, perhaps even points out the kind of obstacles they, themselves, may have occasionally encountered when trying to cultivate mindfulness (self-irony is often greatly appreciated). The cultivation of mindfulness itself goes far beyond formal mindfulness exercises and also includes moments of sharing, listening, speaking and even written reflection.

After each mindfulness exercise, sufficient time should be allowed for discussion, investigation and dialogue with those participants who wish to exchange their experiences. All experiences are welcome. The aim is openly to explore the individual experiences of the participants without corrective interventions and to explore what people have perceived in practice. One challenge is to remain as direct as possible in the lived experience without slipping into concepts or theories. Often individual personal comments reflect experiences that other people in the group have also made. Reflecting on these, together, can produce new insights into how the mind or emotions work (e.g. participants are often surprised at how the mind often gets distracted from the object of awareness despite best intentions; this indicates that we have less control over our mind than we might have previously thought). Additionally, it can be useful to emphasize the diversity of experiences, which reflects the unique experience by which individuals may respond to the same mindfulness instruction. Such group dialogue can also be helpful for participants who may have encountered difficulties during an exercise

by acknowledging that challenging experiences can sometimes occur and they are free to end any exercise prematurely if it becomes excessively stressful, perhaps gently to try again at a later time. At these moments, it may help to clarify that mindfulness is not always about reaching states of peace or relaxation, but also about becoming aware of and exploring whatever may come up – pleasant or unpleasant – provided we are not overwhelmed by the experience.

Misunderstandings about the type of exercise instructions can also be resolved during these discussions. This dialogue can sometimes be a challenge for the teacher, even for very experienced mindfulness teachers. It is important to remember that your role as a teacher is to facilitate the exploration of the direct experiences of meditation – not to seek your own answers, but to explore together with the participants their own experiences and interpretations. Often it is better openly to acknowledge when you "don't know" how to respond or to say that you need time to process a comment, rather than to force a superficial response. This dialogue, therefore, represents an essential phase in which the mindfulness experiences of the participants sometimes begin to consolidate into insights and new perspectives. However, it is an open process that is not based on preconceived conclusions or lessons.

In general, teachers can benefit from being mindful of themselves at home or in a group. The ability to become aware of body and mind states is a gradually developing ability that can enable you to deal with stressful situations more easily, to pay more attention to your own needs and to improve your relationship with other people as well as with the world at large. To maintain awareness of the experiences we have in the world – across all challenges in our lives – with as much openness and kindness as possible can be seen as a necessary condition for nurturing empathy, compassion and tolerance. This applies equally to mindfulness teachers and mindfulness learners.

The exercises in this toolkit cannot teach you or your learners to develop mindfulness in a deep way. At best, they can serve as impulses to pursue mindfulness lessons and programs elsewhere. Experiment with the exercises, first with yourself, then with your learners, and always in an easy and playful way. If the exercises cause a significant degree of frustration, doubt, insecurity or other emotional difficulties – for the learner or for yourself as a teacher – seriously consider carefully bringing the exercise to an early end. Do this with the realization that teaching and learning mindfulness is not easy, even for experienced practitioners/teachers.

After the session:

It is also useful to take a few minutes or more after each session to think about your impressions of what happened during the session.

Recommendations for reflection after each session:

Take a few minutes to get in touch with yourself.

- How do I feel right now (physically, emotionally, mentally)?
- How did I perceive the learners? Have I noticed differences between before and after? Have there been any visible changes I've noticed?
- How was the time of dialogue and investigation? Did I keep to having a discussion about the direct experiences of meditation? Was I really listening? Did I become entangled in my own concepts and interpretations? Where could I have better supported the shared exploration? When was I challenged and how did I react to this challenge?
- What do I want to change and do differently next time in class and during subsequent dialogues?
- Can I be generous and kind to my own self-critique?

General information:

The introduction to this toolkit described the origin and character of this toolkit. When using the toolkit, it is important to consider not only what it is capable of, but also what it cannot be. The exercises and instructions in this toolkit are not comparable to a mindfulness program conducted by professionally trained mindfulness teachers (e.g. with certification in MBSR). Rather, this toolkit aims to encourage educational practitioners to try something new, to experiment with the various offers of the toolkit and to expand their own possibilities for action in dealing with issues of mindfulness and sustainability. It is about making your own personal experiences with mindfulness practice and passing them on to others as best you can. Working with professional mindfulness teachers can be very helpful for the personal cultivation of mindfulness, but also for facilitating learning. However, this may not always be possible within the timeframe of your first introduction into learning and teaching aspects of mindfulness.

It is also not uncommon that intense emotions or challenging personal experiences can come up when you or your learners practice mindfulness exercises. Preparation for these situations will not always be possible; therefore the support of a close colleague, an experienced mindfulness practitioner, a trained counsellor or a therapist is essential and can prove to be extremely helpful in difficult circumstances.

Illustration after Van Bilsen (2009)

Mind full or mindful?

Module 1
Personal dimension

1

Mindfulness has in many ways to do with exploring ourselves. It can be an invitation to listen inside us moment by moment to come into contact with our immediate experience. A mixture of alertness and curiosity are essential qualities.

You can already get a first impression of this if you take a short break from reading this text, close your eyes and direct your attention to the parts of your body that you can feel most spontaneously. In order to get an idea of what mindfulness is, all you need is a willingness to consciously turn to the immediate experience of your own body sensations. If you are willing to go along with this little experiment, you may notice that other sensory impressions, such as ambient sounds or your own thoughts, may compete for your attention. Becoming aware of this and gently returning to awareness of, say, your own breath is part of mindfulness practice. So there is no generally "correct" experience, no "right" or "wrong" way to practice mindfulness, provided you have the intention to stay aware of the moment (if you don't, there is also nothing wrong: you merely opted out of the mindfulness experiment). It's like going to a film you've heard or read something about: you may have some idea about the story but the full experience of viewing the film from beginning to end is always much different and can be much richer. However, perhaps the person sitting right next to you is constantly rustling with the popcorn, or you are just suffering from a bad cold, and you find it difficult to get involved in the movie or to be able concentrate on it at all. Films can also be quite different: sometimes a drama with a rather complex plot, sometimes a sobering documentary or an entertaining comedy. Mindful awareness can be kind of like viewing a film. You may get distracted, but the story line is your own personal experience, sometimes funny, sometimes sad, sometimes happy, sometimes exciting, sometimes boring. And you are not just watching but consciously living that experience!

Perhaps one could say that each and everyone of us has the innate capability of investigating our own lived experience from the first day of life, if not before. We continuously communicate with and explore the world with all our senses. We learn how to navigate through the many challenges of life, explore what is most important to us, and develop understanding and values. Mindfulness meditation is a systematic approach to investigating that lived experience as it journeys from moment to moment, making use of our innate sense of curiosity, our abilities to perceive the world with our mind and body and our capacities for maintaining alertness, attention and awareness. We further discover what we really are able to perceive in our bodies and minds, whether sensations, moods, emotions, cognitions or imaginal processing. We might say, mindfulness is a way to get to know and understand ourselves better in relation to the world around us.

The following exercises in this module help us to develop mindfulness towards ourselves and to reflect on our personal experiences

From the first careful awareness of the breath to years and decades of meditation practice, the basic approach does not change: it is about experiencing your own lived experience in the world! What is the quality of my breathing at this moment today? What does my body feel like when I am absorbed in particular kinds of thoughts? How does my awareness shift from moment to moment (attending to my body, my moods or outside influences, like sounds or smells), and what does each moment feel like when I attempt to fully experience it?

It might also be helpful to know that the Chinese character for mindfulness includes both "mind" and "heart" and that in the earliest Asian descriptions, "mindfulness" is synonymous with "heartfulness". So mindfulness practice is not solely a form of attention training but also fundamentally aimed at intentional development of qualities such as openness, kindness, patience and compassion. In other words, mindfulness is a way of training the heart as well as the mind. Indeed, attending to what is happening from moment to moment within us and outside us is not always easy or pleasant (although it can often be that too!). So to remain on target during mindfulness exercises, we really need to remain open and generous to whatever challenges come our way. Otherwise we lapse back into our ordinary thinking, analyzing, ruminating or just being on automatic pilot, and those states are certainly not mindful. This implies learning to be more kind and accepting toward our own perceived difficulties, mistakes, deficiencies and lack of control, as well as those of others. This does not mean, however, that we give up aspirations for self-development or accept everything that comes our way that we might be able to positively influence, merely that we recognize that life is not, and we are not, perfect, things happen and we often cannot control events. Of course, this practice is not easy and requires regular exercise. However, it can simply start with opening up to bodily sensations, like the breath, noticing whenever attention becomes lost and gently bringing awareness back to inspiration and expiration, over and over and over again.

Mindfulness practice is not limited to sitting on the meditation cushion or chair and silently meditating. Our everyday life is where mindfulness is really important and comes alive. Daily life offers a rich variety of situations and experiences for practise. For example, it opens opportunities for more conscious examination of the motives, patterns of behaviour and thoughts that accompany our daily consumer decisions. Which body sensations do I notice as I walk through the supermarket while a wide range of advertising displays and product design compete for my attention? What emotions and thoughts come into my mind while I eat my meal during lunch break?

So mindfulness can be relevant to real-life issues, like consumerism: Mindfulness might be able to help us better understand whether our buying behaviour actually leads to greater contentment and comfort. If we explore our personal consumption with the help of mindfulness, interesting questions arise: How much of something do I really need? How much is too little? How much is too much? To what extent is my sense of contentment and joy, indeed, related to possession of material consumer goods?

No two people are the same. So our experience of mindfulness will also greatly vary from individual to individual. If you found this brief description of mindfulness at all interesting, why not set out on your own personal adventure into experimenting with learning and teaching mindfulness by using this toolkit?

Meditations

Bodyscan

Focus:

Body sensations of the whole body

Materials:

Clock, space to lie down, bell

Preparation:

Create a preferably disturbance-free environment

Time:

Aprox. 10–15 minutes

Instruction:

Three gentle bell chimes —— First of all, settle into a lying position on your back or side in a posture you find most comfortable and relaxing … Slowly close your eyes if that feels right. Otherwise just gently gaze upon a spot in front of you at the floor, the ceiling or wall, but in such a way that you are not distracted by looking at someone else … If during the exercise you notice that you fall asleep, you could help yourself to stay awake and continue to follow the exercise by raising your knees, or resting the elbow of one arm so that the underarm is perpendicular to the floor, or breathing deeply a few times or continuing the exercise while sitting … If you now direct your attention more to the inner world of sensations, mood states or thoughts, you may be able to observe what happens when you and the space around you become stiller … Can you notice how you are feeling right now in body and mind: is your body still relaxed? Is there a sense of curiosity or perhaps boredom even? Do you feel calm or agitated? The entire realm of feelings are possible and allowed, provided they are not overwhelming … Are there thoughts still racing through your head? If so, note what thoughts you last had and gently return to noticing what is happening right now —— *Longer pause* —— If you like, explore a little more precisely where in your body you can best feel the movement of your breath … Try to remain experiencing the breathing sensations as the air flows in and out of you, as best you can —— *Longer pause* —— If your attention drifts and you lose contact with your breath, register it in a friendly way, note where your mind has wandered, and come back to the awareness of your breathing … Drifting out of awareness and coming back is a very normal part of meditation —— *Longer pause* —— Now if you are willing, start to bring your awareness to your both feet … Imagine your awareness is a flashlight that shines to both feet at the very end of your legs … Feel into your toes, soles and ankles and be aware of the emerging body sensations for a few moments —— *Longer pause* —— Gradually we will now journey through the whole body … Now softly let go of your feet with your attention and feel your lower legs, knees and thighs … Can you feel the contact of your legs with the mat and floor? … Which part of your legs do you feel most strongly, which least? —— *Longer pause* —— Are there any differences in quality of feeling between your legs? —— *Longer pause* —— Now draw your attention to your pelvic area … Perhaps you can be aware how the air you breathe in flows from your nose, down your throat into your lungs and your pelvis moves with it … Notice for a few breaths how your pelvis adjusts to each in-breath and out-breath —— *Longer pause* —— Then gently bring your attention to your lower back … What are sensations in your lower back, both sides of the back, deep into the lower back? … Now move up a little to the middle part of your back … The upper part … What do you feel at your shoulder blades? … What is the contact between your back with the ground? —— *Longer pause* —— Now bring your awareness to the front of your body, to the belly … Let your breath flow as naturally as possible and direct your awareness to your belly as it rises and falls with each breath … —— *Longer pause* —— Now travel with your awareness to your chest … the outside of your chest … then deep within your chest wall, just feeling whatever you feel? —— *Longer pause* —— Now glide your attention down to each hand and then up the arms … Fingers, wrists, forearms, upper arms and shoulders —— *Longer pause* —— Whenever your attention drifts away, as soon as you notice, just register where you have been and gently return to the awareness of your body sensations and breathing —— *Longer pause* —— Now focus your attention to your throat and neck, moving slowly to your head … the back of your head … the sides of your head … your ears … your temple … your cheeks … then your face, your mouth and inside your mouth … your nose … your eyes and eyebrows … your forehead … Travelling now to your scalp and the top of your head, then deep into your head to feel whatever you feel —— *Longer pause* —— Now let your awareness with each out-breath flow from the top of your head through your entire body to the tips of your toes, head, shoulders, arms, upper body, pelvis, leg, feet down to the soles of the feet and the tips of your toes. With each out-breath slowly journey back from the toes to the top of your head … Let your breath flow calmly and naturally and observe the bodily sensations that arise and rise and subside —— *Longer pause* —— Now gently bring your attention to the spot you best notice your breath and rest there until the bell chimes —— *Three gentle bell chimes* —— If you still have your eyes closed, you can now begin to gently open them and redirect your awareness outwards … See the surroundings around you —— *Longer pause* —— Roll over to the side and get up from there to avoid strain on your back … Stretch when you feel the need to stretch your body a little and wake up more … perhaps you can try to stay in touch with your body and awareness while turning back as you return to the space of the room and the other people.

Possible questions for the discussion afterwards:

How did you feel during the exercise, for example, relaxed or restless, energized or bored, concentrated or distracted, content or irritated?
What did you experience in your body?
Do you ever have similar experiences in your everyday life?

Self-compassion

Focus:

Compassion and benevolence towards oneself

Materials:

Clock, space to sit or lie down, bell

Preparation:

Create a preferably disturbance-free environment

Time:

Aprox. 10 minutes

Instruction:

Three gentle bell chimes —— First of all, settle into a sitting or lying posture you find comfortable and relaxing … slowly close your eyes if that feels right. Otherwise just gently gaze upon a spot in front of you at the floor, the ceiling or wall, but in such a way that you are not distracted by looking at someone else … If you now direct your attention more to the inner world of sensations, mood states or thoughts, you may be able to observe what happens when you and the space around you become stiller … Can you notice how you are feeling right now in body and mind: is your body still relaxed? Is there a sense of curiosity or perhaps boredom even? Do you feel calm or agitated? The entire realm of feelings are possible and allowed, provided they are not overwhelming … Are there thoughts still racing through your head? If so, note what thoughts you last had and gently return to noticing what is happening right now —— *Longer pause* —— If you like, explore a little more precisely where in your body you can best feel the movement of your breath … Try to remain experiencing the breathing sensations as the air flows in and out of you, as best you can —— *Longer pause* ——

If your attention drifts and you lose contact with your breath, register it in a friendly way, note where your mind has wandered, and come back to the awareness of your breathing —— *Longer pause* —— We are going to explore here feeling states of kindness and friendliness. So now perhaps you can try to remember a situation, in which someone was friendly or kind to you … Maybe someone from your family helped you with a difficult task … A friend shared something with you or made you happy in some other way … Or someone else showed you kindness with their words or actions —— *Longer pause* —— Now imagine the situation in as much detail as possible … What did the surroundings look like? … Can you recall the other person's posture and facial expression? —— *Longer pause* —— And now, try to remember how it made you feel … What did your body feel like in the situation when that person was being kind to you? … Did you have any special thought? … How were your own mood and emotions at that moment? —— *Longer pause* —— Now try to relive the situation as best you can … If an emotion arises in you, can you localize it in your body as you feel it – maybe in your stomach, your chest or in another region – or maybe it is more spread out and hard to define … Let the emotion, wherever it is, should it be pleasant, grow larger, like a sphere of light spreading through your body —— *Longer pause* —— If your attention wanders, don't worry … Just come back to the awareness of your body at any time and reconnect to this earlier experience when someone has done you good and helped you to feel better —— *Longer pause* —— Perhaps you can now gently let go of that situation but still direct that feeling of friendship and warmth to yourself … Find a few sentence that expresses caring and kindness to yourself … A sentence that gives you strength, for example: May I be healthy … May I be happy … May I be safe … or some other expression of wishing yourself well … What does this do to you as you silently repeat these expressions of well wishing to yourself? Does it feel good in your body or not? How does your mood change while repeating these wishes? —— *Longer pause* —— Now, gradually just let go of the sentence and feel your breath and body again for a few moments —— *Longer pause* —— *Three gentle bell chimes* —— If your eyes are still closed, you can now begin to gently open them and redirect your awareness more outwards … See what and who are around you … Perhaps, attempt to stay in touch with your feelings while you return to what is happening outside of you.

Possible questions for the discussion afterwards:
What did you experience during the meditation?
How does your body feel compared to before meditation?
How does it feel when someone is caring and friendly towards you?
How did it feel to formulate wishes of kindness and caring to yourself? Was it pleasant or perhaps not so pleasant?

Meditation about meeting needs

Focus:

Feelings and needs

Materials:

Clock, space to sit or lie down, bell

Preparation:

Create a preferably disturbance-free environment

Time:

Aprox. 10 minutes

Instruction:

Three gentle bell chimes —— First of all, settle into a sitting or lying posture you find comfortable and relaxing … slowly close your eyes if that feels right. Otherwise just gently gaze upon a spot in front of you at the floor, the ceiling or wall, but in such a way that you are not distracted by looking at someone else … If you now direct your attention more to the inner world of sensations, mood states or thoughts, you may be able to observe what happens when you and the space around you become stiller … What are you feeling right now in your body or your mind? Now, if you are willing, bring your attention to the place you can best feel the movement of your breath, maybe your nostrils, or abdomen or your chest … Try to remain experiencing the breathing sensations as the air flows in and out of you, as best you can —— *Longer pause* —— If your attention drifts and you lose contact with your breath, register that in as patient a way as possible, note where your mind has wandered, and come back to the awareness of your breathing —— *Longer pause* ——

During the meditation you are always invited to meet any emerging emotions you may feel in a way as kind and open you can: it sometimes may not be possible, and that's fine too … Is there a mood state or emotion you are feeling right now? For example, calm or anxious, bored or interested, content or irritated? Or perhaps something else? … Now return to your awareness of the breath, while keeping some awareness of how you are feeling in the background, if that is possible for you. And notice for a few minutes whether the breath and feeling tone remain the same or maybe shift a little? If there is some change, does it slowly drift from one experience to the other or is it abrupt? Is your experience of this moment pleasant or unpleasant or maybe neutral? —— *Longer pause* —— Whenever you lose yourself in a thought or a feeling, bring your awareness back to your breath and the body sensations that go with it —— *Longer pause* —— What mood do you feel right now? —— *Longer pause* —— And now? … And now? Is it pleasant, unpleasant or neutral? Can you stay in contact with how you are feeling without getting lost or distracted by how you are feeling? —— *Longer pause* —— When you are in contact with your inner mood and your emotions or feeling, maybe you are feeling satisfaction and you notice you would like to stay longer in this state … Maybe you feel stressed and you feel the need to stretch or move or to express your discontent … If you want to, experiment with observing your feelings and the thoughts that may arise … Can you observe your feelings, thoughts or sense of needing something, like they are clouds in the sky that come and slowly change form or just float by —— *Longer pause* —— When you realize your attention has wandered, just gently bring your awareness, as best you can, back to your body, your emotion or the sense of needing something —— *Longer pause* —— Let your breath flow as calmly and gently as possible … Trying to bring awareness to your body, feelings and sense of needing something is the purpose of the exercise … It's just about observing, exploring your own body sensations, moods and emotions, not achieving anything specific —— *Longer pause* —— *Three gentle bell chimes* —— If you still have your eyes closed, you can now begin to gently open them and redirect your awareness more outwards —— *Longer pause* —— See the surroundings around you … If you want to, experiment with staying in touch with your body or feeling state as you return in the room around you.

Possible questions for the discussion afterwards:

What was your experience during the meditation? Were there any particular emotions or physical feelings or thoughts that arose?
Did you notice that those physical or emotional feelings were connected to a sense of needing something, whether to remain in that state or to change your mood or posture by taking an action? Was that associated with a feeling of being satisfied or being unsatisfied?

Learning tasks

Satisfaction, dissatisfaction and material wealth

Focus:

Reflection on the dependence of satisfaction on material wealth

Materials:

Printouts of Heinrich Böll's anecdote on the lowering of work morale (available at http://t1p.de/g8cb)

Preparation:

none

Time:

Aprox. 45 minutes

Instruction:

Compared to previous centuries, people in many parts of the world today live in unprecedented wealth. However, life satisfaction seems to stagnate above a certain level of material wealth. But what levels and types of material wealth support our well-being?

- Read Heinrich Boell's short story. What's your opinion? Write down what thoughts and feelings you observe inside you when reading the text.
- How would you relate this text and its subject matter to your own life? Write a short essay about it.
- Discuss your thoughts with a talking partner.

Possible questions for the discussion afterwards:

How were you feeling while reading the text?
How do you relate to the opinions of the fisherman or the tourist?
Where do you encounter the figures of the fisherman or the tourist with their attitude to life in your everyday life?

Goods and minimalistic lifestyles

Instruction:

People in consumer societies often own several thousand consumer goods. The mere question of how these stocks are to be managed or even stored has become a stress factor today, not to mention the high environmental costs. But how often do we actually use the various consumer goods and commodities? How much do they mean to us? Which of our possessions is actually a source of joy, which rather a source of distraction?

- The photographer Peter Menzel travelled the world. On his journey he asked the families to arrange all their belongings outside their home and took a photo of them with all their material possessions. Take a look at his pictures: What do you see? Where do you think these families come from? What would a picture with you or your family look like?
- Observe yourself for a week: How do you use the material goods you have at home? Which of your possessions do you like, and which of your possessions do you find rather annoying? Bring some of these goods to class and put everything on the ground. Select an item and ask the person who brought it along for its story.

Do some internet research on the term "decluttering". What is this about? Share your results in class. What do you think about the practice of "decluttering" and this lifestyle, what could it mean for your life? What emotional reactions can you observe when you think about these questions?

Possible questions for the discussion afterwards:

What struck you when you consciously looked at your possessions at home?
Which pleasant, which unpleasant thoughts and feelings have you had?
Which possessions are particularly important to you? Why are they?
Did you notice any possessions you hadn't even remembered?
What role do possessions play in a "good life" for you?

Focus:

Awareness of the presence of material goods in our daily lives

Critical assessment of the benefits and limitations of consumer goods as satisfiers of our needs

Dealing with minimalistic lifestyles

Materials:

Images by the photographer Peter Menzel (availabe at: http://t1p.de/mfon)

Preparation:

Provide internet connection for online research

Time:

Aprox. 2 x 45 minutes

In everyday life

Mindful writing

Focus:

The stream of one's own thoughts

Materials:

Pen, sufficient paper to write and a timer, or alarm clock

Preparation:

A preferably calm space, for example at your desk at home

Time:

Aprox. 5 minutes

Instructions to perform the task independently:

For this exercise, find a place where you can be as undisturbed as possible, such as your desk at home. You also need a pen, enough writing paper and an alarm clock. In any case, you should turn your mobile phone off for the entire duration of the exercise. Take a few conscious breaths and sit as upright as you can but in a comfortable posture. Now set your timer at three minutes and prepare yourself to immediately write down all your thoughts that go through your head. It is important that you write continuously without putting the pen down. If you no longer know what you can write, write for example: "I don't know what to write anymore". You can put everything in your head on paper, because you don't have to show the text to anyone unless you want to. Suitable formulation aids could be:

- Right now I'm thinking…
- Right now I feel…
- I'm aware that…

During the exercise you write down everything that comes to mind. As if the flow of your thoughts was flowing right through the pen onto the writing paper. When the timer rings, take three deep breaths and then read the written text.

All clear? Then let's get started. If you like, maybe take some time to go over the instructions again until you feel you have understood the process well. Then take a few deep breaths, realize how you are feeling, start the countdown on your timer and start writing.

Possible questions for self-reflection:

How did I feel during this exercise?
What did I notice after reading the text again at the end?

Contentment and misfortune

Adapted after Koutsoukis (2010)

Focus:

Reflection on the subjective perception of contentment and misfortune

Materials:

none

Preparation:

none

Time:

Aprox. 10–15 minutes

Instruction:

One man's joy is another's sorrow? Whether something makes us happy or unhappy strongly depends on how we perceive and evaluate it. A classic example is the famous character Robinson Crusoe, who was stranded on a remote island and began to take into account not only the disadvantages but also the advantages of his new situation. How can such a perspective help us in our daily lives to take a more differentiated look at situations in our lives that make us happy or unhappy?

- Think of a situation where you've been feeling unhappy lately. Make some notes about why this situation has made you unhappy and what you find unfortunate about it. Then think of the same situation: what could be good aspects or new opportunities arising from this situation?
- Repeat this exercise the next time you feel unhappy or dissatisfied.

Possible questions for the discussion afterwards:

What can you do to encounter feelings of sadness and misfortune?
How helpful is this solution?
How well do different strategies to deal with the feeling of sadness and misfortune help you in the short and long term?

Module 2
Social dimension

2

If we extend the boundaries of our mindfulness beyond our own personal experience, we can include our fellow human beings in our watchful, curious and friendly exploration. In this module we would like to expand our field of awareness beyond our own body sensations, basic moods, emotions and thoughts to encompass a broader context of relationship to others.

Our relationships with each other are as unique as we, ourselves, are as individual people. If you like, take a moment to read this text and reflect on whom you meet every day and with whom you have close or less close relationships? Or more direct or less direct relationships with? It could be a close friend, or the relationship to someone quite far away, like the authors of this text who have tried to relate to you by presenting information and exercise you may be rather unfamiliar with? It may be a teacher you now have or one you had long ago? Or more globally, the worker in the cotton field in Kazakhstan who picked the cotton of the jeans or other clothes you may now be wearing? So our human relations extend well beyond our immediate family, friends and fellow students to include an enormous number of fellow human beings all over the world.

The Tibetan word for meditation is “gom” and means “to familiarize oneself with”. At the very personal level, we develop a deeper understanding of the processes of our own mind and thus strengthen our intuition, knowledge and self-care. A trusting relationship with ourselves is the prerequisite for a trusting relationship with others. If we extend our mindfulness practice to our interactions with other people, we can explore attentively and become familiar with the extent of our connectedness with others, as well as the points at which we seem to draw boundaries between ourselves and others. What does it mean to feel connected to another human being? What new insights arise when I consciously take someone else’s perspective that differs from my own?

Mindfulness, in relation to fellow human beings in our immediate environment, means bringing into awareness the moments we turn toward our experiences with others, what draws us toward or away from others, what gives us feelings of connection or disconnection. Every social interaction gives us the opportunity to experience new things and learn about ourselves in a vigilant and curious way – be it while we are eating with our family, sitting next to a stranger on the bus or communicating with a good friend far away via the Internet. Perhaps we become aware of our own needs, such as the desire for belonging, identification or participation. Perhaps we become aware of different emotions like envy, generosity, anger, and compassion. Mindfulness invites us to look at all our experiences without prejudice and to create an inner space in which our emotions find a place

The following exercises in this module help us to broaden our mindful awareness beyond our purely personal experience into relationships with fellow human beings.

without letting ourselves be overly absorbed by them. Which socially oriented emotions, such as goodwill or empathy, make me feel comfortable talking to another person? Which emotional qualities make me feel separated from others? Perhaps this awareness gained by mindfulness practice can help us find a better way to deal with emotions when disagreements arise or when I feel threatened in social situations?

If we sit on a meditation cushion or on a bench in the park and consciously pay attention to our own breath, we seem to be in direct contact with our experience. We breathe in and out and feel our body sensations as they occur from moment to moment. However, when there is someone else on the bench next to us or when we are sitting in the same room with others, we are not only sharing a common space, but also the very air we breathe, including the oxygen that keeps us alive. Just as breathing is a fundamental process of life itself, in which we all literally share the common resource of the air around us, so too is it with the water we drink or the food we eat. Our lives are all closely interwoven and interdependent, even at the most basic levels of existence.

If mindfulness practice can help us to come more into contact with our shared needs and experiences in satisfying them, it may also help us to gain greater sensitivity as to how we might be best able to meet those shared needs, given the limited resources that may be available.

In the social dimension, mindfulness may help us to stay in contact with ourselves while opening up to others. Because kindness, generosity and patience are so intimately involved with learning mindfulness, expanding mindfulness into awareness of social relationships might foster a greater sense of solidarity and togetherness, as well as serve as a nourishing source of strength for our daily lives. We may be able to better notice and expand our own limits as we actively attempt to exercise empathy with others.

Meditations

Mindful dialogue

Focus:

Speaking, listening and sharing with each other

Materials:

Clock, space to sit, bell

Preparation:

Two students sit opposite each other and are organized into person A and person B

Time:

Aprox. 20 minutes

Instruction:

Part 1: Monologue

Find a comfortable upright sitting position and close your eyes for a few moments … Bring your attention to your body and feel the areas of your body that are in contact with the chair or cushion and the floor —— *Longer pause* —— Once the bell rings, person A starts talking for three minutes … Person A can talk about whatever he or she likes, for example how he or she is doing, what just happened, what is bothering him or her … These three minutes belong to person A, who continues to feel his or her bodily sensations as best as possible while speaking and perceiving the contact with the chair or cushion … Meanwhile person B has the task to listen attentively and to remain silent … Person B is also invited to notice his or her own bodily sensations … If person A can't immediately think of anything, both of them can remain silent until something comes up … Or not …

One bell chime —— Three minutes talk time —— One bell chime

Part 2: Talk

In the next phase, person B repeats what he or she thinks he or she understood about what person A said … Person B, for example, could start with words like: I believe you said that …

One bell chime —— Three minutes talk time —— One bell chime

Part 3: Feedback

Now person A provides feedback about the extent to which she/he felt understood or clarifies any possible misunderstanding …

One bell chime —— Three minutes talk time —— One bell chime

Afterwards the roles are changed and the process can be repeated.

Possible questions for the discussion afterwards:

What did you experience during the exercise?
How does this mindful way of communicating compare to communication in your everyday life?
What else did you notice?

Compassion

Focus:

Compassion and benevolence towards all living beings of the earth

Materials:

Clock, space to sit, bell

Preparation:

Create a preferably disturbance-free environment

Time:

Aprox. 10 minutes

Instruction:

Three gentle bell chimes —— Find a sitting or lying position you feel is comfortable and which you think you might be able to maintain in a relaxed way for a quarter of an hour or so … Gently close your eyes if that feels okay. Otherwise place your gaze so you are looking at a spot on the ceiling if you are lying, or a spot on the floor if you are sitting … Perhaps, you can notice whatever arises as your body begins to physically quiet: what are the physical sensations that arise? Do you actually feel more quiet in your body and your mind? Or perhaps not: sometimes awareness of a little agitation or nervousness can also come up, which is fine as well, since we are exploring whatever is happening at this very moment and we can't always control how we are feeling. Notice any emotional feelings, anticipations, thoughts or images that may arise, and just allow them to be, as well as you can, to just let them come and go … If you get caught up in a thought or image, gently return to the question, "where am I right now?", not thinking about an answer but just noticing what you are experiencng here and now —— *Longer pause* —— Now let's focus a bit more closely, if you are willing, on the spot in your body where you best feel the movement of your breathing – maybe somewhere around your nostril or your belly or your chest … Try to rest on that spot, as best you can, for a few moments to make continuous contact with the sensations that arise as the air flows in and out of you —— *Longer pause* —— If your attention strays and you lose contact with your breath for a moment, then just patiently register where you have been in your mind and gently return to the sensations of the inbreath and the outbreath … Very likely, you may be distracted more often than once or twice, but each time merely notice where your mind strayed and escort your attention back, in as friendly a way as possible, to the sensations of breathing in and out. Distractions are a common part of mindfulness exercises; they sometimes happen less and sometimes more, but they also help us realize that even with the best of intentions, we are not always able to control our minds and that the wandering mind is a fact of life —— *Longer pause* —— Now if your eye are closed, just keep them closed, but, nevertheless, see if you can now broaden your awareness to feel the space around you, to extend your awareness to the presence of the room and all your classmates who are in the room with you … What is your physical position in relation to your classmates? Extend your awareness knowing that you and they are breathing and exchanging the same body of air in the room, that you all are sharing the very same mindfulness exercise, each of you with your own immediate physical sensations or emotions or thought, and each getting distracted and returning to the experience of breathing and the awareness of each other in the room —— *Longer pause* —— How does your body feel right now, what sensations, emotions or images arise within you as you expand your awareness and include your immediate environment and your classmates into your awareness? —— *Longer pause* ——

Maybe you feel relaxed right now or maybe not, but surely you would like to feel content and happy in this moment and in the future. So if you are willing to, take this moment to wish yourself a sense of comfort, contentment and happiness, as you sit or lie here: "May I feel ease and comfort and happiness." … "May I feel well, safe and secure." … Or use your own phrases or even images that convey to you what it means to be happy, healthy and safe. Of course repeating such wishes will not necessarily create the situation you wish for. But just notice what does arise in your body and mind as you bring such wishes into awareness … Now, I invite you to extend those wishes to all the classmates you feel comfortable doing so with. For example, you can use phrases like: "May we all be happy" … "May we all be healthy" … "May

we all be safe" … Or find your own phrases or images and continue to maintain this intention to wish your classmates and yourself comfort, safety and health for a few minutes, perhaps repeating the phrases or revisualizing the images you find most meaningful —— *Longer pause* —— Notice the sensations, emotions or thoughts that may arise as you wish your fellow students and yourself well … Now in the last few minutes, let the room you are expand ever more broadly, and extend your wishes of wellbeing beyond merely your classmates and yourself, to include not only all the other people in the world, but the animals, the plants and the whole environment as well … Just rest there in the presence of your body and mind in the midst of the entire world and universe —— *Longer pause* —— Now gently and gradually bring your breath back into the foreground, becoming aware of the inbreath and outbreath as it circulates into the room and into the entire world and just remain with your breath until the chimes ring —— *Longer pause* —— *Three gentle bell chimes* —— Now slowly open your eyes and bring your attention more outwards … Notice the people and the environment all around you and how you feel, as you begin to re-enter your more usual life …

Note:

Eventually with repetition, this exercise can expand ever wider to include teachers, and all personnel, as well as those individuals, fellow students, teachers or others with whom one may have difficult relationships.

Possible questions for the discussion afterwards:

How did you feel during the meditation?
What kind of feelings, thoughts and images did you have as you wished yourself and others happiness and wellbeing?
How did your body feel, how did your mind?
How are you feeling at this moment right now?

Jeans journey

Focus:

Clothes and chains of production

Materials:

Clock, space to sit, bell

Preparation:

Create a preferably disturbance-free environment

Time:

Aprox. 10 minutes

Instruction:

Three gentle bell chimes —— If it is comfortable for you, sit upright, close your eyes or focus on a point on the floor in front of you … Now bring your attention to whatever physical sensations, thoughts or emotions you notice, just allowing them to be what they are —— *Longer pause* —— At what spot in your body can you feel your breath most easily? … Maybe the abdomen, the stomach, the chest or the nostrils? … As best you can, just remain with your awareness of breathing in and breathing out —— *Longer pause* —— Now expand your attention to your whole body and notice the contact between your clothes and your skin … For example, your socks, pants, T-shirt, top … What sensations make you aware of wearing clothes right now? —— *Longer pause* —— What is the quality of these sensations … Scratchy, smooth, soft, hard, stiff or stretchable? —— *Longer pause* —— As you focus your awareness on the sensations of contact between your body and your clothing, try to imagine all those people who were involved in making the different pieces of clothing you are now wearing … Who contributed to the various phases of production of clothing, from the growing of natural products, like cotton and wool? The entire production chain, from the spinning of yarn, to its weaving into material, to the designing, dyeing, cutting and sewing of the final garment, to its export and merchandizing? —— *Longer pause* —— What kinds of images, thoughts and feeling arise when you expand your awareness to envision all the people who have contributed to making your clothes: perhaps workers in cotton fields in Asia were involved? Other people working in the factories of Eastern Europe? Or a sock-knitting granny? —— *Longer pause* —— Now, if you are able, imagine yourself as a consumer, as part of this production chain, alongside garment designers, field workers, factory owners, suppliers, shop assistants … How does it feel to be part of this network? … What does this idea trigger, how does the physical contact with your clothes feel like now – any different? Do any thoughts or emotions arise for you, when you just open up to an awareness of the present moment right here and now? —— *Longer pause* —— Maybe you become aware of all the people, very likely in different parts of the world, who labored long and hard for each of the garments and undergarments you are wearing? Does any recognizable feeling or emotion come up when you consider the toil and working conditions many people had to undergo so that you can be comfortable, warm and perhaps even feel fashionable in the clothes you are now wearing? Maybe some feeling of gratefulness, of compassion, or even some other less positive feelings like anger or shame about the conditions in which some garment workers, for centuries and certainly also at this very moment, have been forced to work? Or maybe some other very different impressions, thoughts or feelings? —— *Longer pause* —— Now gently return your awareness to the physical feeling of the clothing on your skin … Let go of all thoughts for just a moment and relax as best you can while you rest in your in-breath and your out-breath, one after the other for just a little while —— *Longer pause* —— *Three gentle bell chimes* —— If your eyes are still closed, begin to gradually open them and direct your awareness more outwards … See the surroundings around you … If you like, take a look at other peoples' clothes in the room and reflect for a last moment on all the people all over the world that have been involved in making these clothes and their lives, as you might imagine them.

Possible questions for the discussion afterwards:

How did you feel during meditation and reflection?
What insights did you have?
Which new questions have appeared?
How are you feeling in your clothes right now?

Learning tasks

Clothes check

Adapted after Britz et al. (2007)

Focus:

Awareness of consumer habits in the area of clothing

Ability to research information on production processes of consumer goods

Materials:

Online mapping tool e.g. mapcustomizer.com

Preparation:

Provide internet connection for online research

Time:

Aprox. 2 x 45 minutes

Instruction:

Clothes often travel far until they reach our shops. After they have been bought by us, many items of clothing are hardly worn, but spend most of the time in closets together with often heaps of other, largely unused clothing. Do we know how much clothing we consume? What do we know about our clothes in general? Where did it come from? Who produced it and under what conditions?

- Check your wardrobe: How many items of clothing do you own and how often do you wear them? In order to compare more easily, you can agree on different categories (e.g. sweaters, trousers) in class.
- Identify the two pieces of clothing you have worn least and most lately. Check these points: What material are they made of? Which brands are involved? In which country were they made? Use a free online mapping tool (e.g. mapcustomizer.com) to show the different countries of origin of your clothing.
- Search the Internet for information on the Clean Clothes Campaign. What is this about? What problems does the campaign address, what solutions does it propose?
- Try to find information about where the brands make their clothes.

Possible questions for the discussion afterwards:

How did your research go? Which feelings and thoughts arose in you?
What makes us consume so much?
Why do we consume clothes and other products produced so far away?

Moments of happiness

Adapted after Schelakovsky & Langer (2008)

Focus:

Reflection on the relation between happiness and material goods

Materials:

none

Preparation:

none

Time:

Aprox. 30–45 minutes

Instruction:

It is a widespread assumption that the pursuit of happiness is something most of us share. The desire to feel happy is a deeply human aspiration. But what does happiness mean for each of us and what are the conditions that make us happy? Do consumer goods play a role in our happiness, and if so, how?

- Think of past moments when you smiled from a sense of feeling happy or when you felt full of joy. Try to remember one, two or three such moments.
- What was it that made you happy? To what extent was this feeling of happiness associated with or even dependent on consumer goods at that moment? What kinds of consumer goods were involved? Do you remember particular goods?

How do you see the relationship between happiness and consumption? Share your experiences in the group and give examples.

Possible questions for the discussion afterwards:

What happens when you think about moments of happiness in your life and feel them again?
Which feelings and thoughts come up in you?
Were there moments when you felt happy without consuming anything; what were these moments like?
How much do we need to consume to be happy?

In everyday life

Mindful meal

Instructions to perform the task independently:

Every time you eat something, you have the opportunity to practice mindfulness. For example, mindfulness might make you more fully enjoy your meal and recognize more quickly when you have had enough to eat. Before your next meal (or snack in between), close your eyes and consciously breathe in and out a few times. Don't do anything else. Take as much time as you want to mindfully eat bite by bite. If you are alone, don't read a magazine or look at your smartphone or distract yourself in any other way from the act of eating. Focus your attention and awareness on your food, use all your senses — visual, tactile, taste, smell and even hearing - and explore what the food you are eating really looks like, what it takes in terms of coordination of body parts to get the food from your plate to mouth, what it smells like before it enters your mouth, what the food in your mouth feels like, how the taste unfolds on your tongue, what reactions your body shows, what sounds may be produced during the act of eating outside and inside the body. Try to remember to keep bringing back your awareness to the physical sensations of eating your food as best you can, should you notice you have gotten distracted. While you are eating, you might also ask yourself where the food you have on your plate comes from and who was involved in the making of those products that compose your meal. Once you have tried this yourself a number of times, you could even invite friends and family — who you think are open enough for such an experiment (openness is really important, since many people might find this a very strange exercise) to have a meal together in silence and with mindfulness.

Possible questions for self-reflection:

What was my experience during mindful eating?
How was it different from the usual way I eat?
Did I have images or thoughts about where the food came from that ended up on my plate?
Or who was involved in the process of producing the food I just ate?

Focus:

Bodily sensations, behavioural patterns and origin of food

Materials:

A meal or a snack

Preparation:

Find a place preferably undisturbed place to be/eat

Time:

Aprox. 5–15 minutes

The STOP exercise:

Illustration after mindfuleating.org/STOP.html

STOP!
Put your cuttlery aside and pause for a moment.

Take a Breath
Take two or three deep breaths and feel you stomache.

Observe
How are you?
How does your food taste?
How hungry are you?

Perfect!
Choose to continue eating, to have something different, or to finish your meal.

Act now

Adapted after Schelakovsky & Langer(2008)

Instruction:

People sometimes feel paralyzed by the enormous problems on our planet and the great challenges of changing the world for the better. They don't know where to start and what to do. To avoid this paralysis, it is important to carefully look for options for action that are both motivating and realistic.

- Close your eyes and think about the following questions: What makes the world worth living for you? Which areas do you find important and valuable for a world you would like to live in? Write key points on a piece of paper.

- Select the key point from the first sheet that seems most important to you at the moment, write it down in the middle of a second sheet. Now write all the actions around it that people might be able to do, which might be helpful, to achieve this important quality of a world worth living for.

- Finally, take a third sheet of paper and choose from the second sheet the actions that you find most appealing and interesting. Now choose an action that you can do in the next two weeks and that you would enjoy doing (e.g. doing something completely new for a week, doing something different than usual or do without something for a week). These ideas should be attractive and motivating for you.

Share your ideas in the learning group.

Possible questions for the discussion afterwards:

Which ideas seem to have a particularly motivating effect on you? Why?
What would help you to actually implement your ideas?
Do you see any obstacles you may encounter when implementing the idea? Which are these, and how might you be able to overcome them?

Focus:

Derive concrete actions from broader visions

Plan concrete activities

Materials:

Three sheets per participant

Preparation:

Create a preferably disturbance-free environment

Time:

Aprox. 45–90 minutes

Module 3
Ecological dimension

3

The author and philosopher Frank White formed the concept of the "overview effect". By this he means a cognitive change of consciousness that results from the experience of having seen – with one's own eyes – that the earth is a small speck of life in an enormously vast space. The realization, White said, which many astronauts described after their return, is "the earth is a whole system, everything on it is connected, and we are a part of it".

It is not only we, ourselves, and our relationships with fellow human beings that can be the subjects of our attentive exploration. All animate and inanimate environments around us, as well as our connections to them, invite us toward attentive exploration. Take just a moment, if you like, while reading this text and examine, openly and from your own unique personal perspective, the environment you inhabit right now … Can you perceive any relationship between the environment you are in and particular bodily sensations or emotions or moods you are now experiencing? Are you at all able to notice what effects the colours, odors, sounds and light around you at this very moment have upon your mind or your body?

One way of defining ecology is to understand it as "the totality of the interrelations between living beings and their environment" (German Duden dictionary). In the context of mindfulness, this could mean exploring the hidden network of relationships between our environment and our thoughts, feelings and actions as individuals and members of social groups at all levels of society. To what extent do our individual and collective actions shape the environment and to what extent are they shaped by it? Consider factors such as your cultural context, the kind of architecture you have grown accustomed to, the places in which you work or play, the media landscape, movies, television, music, new digital forms …

Our very personal perceptions of who we are are closely linked with the environment we experience and inhabit. Mindful awareness needs not only rest upon our inner lives, our sensory awareness or consciousness of our own moods, thoughts and emotions. We can extend our cognizance to include an ecological awareness of all those aspects outside of ourselves that are within our capacities to notice, creating a sense of interconnectedness between ecology and our own inner lives. Such an expanded open awareness might lead to direct insights and perspectives about the relations between environment and personal experience: For example, can we become more conscious about how variations in noise or perceptible air quality can directly affect us? How do changes in ambient temperature, weather or altitude affect us in an immediate sense? The population density of where we are? Or whether we are walking through a noisy paved parking lot or through a grassy knoll surrounded by a forest?

The following exercises in this module help us to extend our mindfulness beyond our purely personal and social experience to our environment and awareness of interconnectedness.

We may even become aware that our very breath is different strolling through the woods than in a parking lot. Breathing, of course, is a natural physiological process that adjusts to both our activities and our environment. And we can always make intentional contact with, and notice, the breath – how it changes when we are quiet or physically active, breathe the fumes of traffic vs. the air of a forest full of trees, are in a crowed elevator vs. riding the elevator alone, sense the thinness of air at higher altitudes vs. the richly iodized air at the ocean seaside. When we intentionally make contact with our breath during mindfulness practice, we examine a natural physiological process of inhalation and exhalation. So our awareness of our breathing, just like our awareness of other bodily and emotional perceptions, not only reflect our own very personal state of being, but are also intimately related to the world around us, actually connect us to that world, the physical environment, the social sphere, the animate and inanimate features, in short the what we define as ecology. So interconnectedness is not merely some abstract concept but a very concrete state of existence in which we, in fact, reside at all moments and which can be, at any moment, directly experienced by merely paying attention, even to something as basic as breathing in and breathing out!

Cultivating this palpable experience of interconnectedness, of, in fact, interbeing with our environment, with our fellow human beings and with the rest of the animate and inanimate world, may make us more sensitive to the fragility of the world we live in – what is restorative for us as individuals and social entities, and what is restorative for the environment, how we can balance the sustainability of the earth with the wants and needs of 7 billion people, how we can more fairly deal with the enormous social inequalities we are confronted with today. We don't have any idea how much a more mindful approach might make a difference, but we believe a change of awareness in the direction of an enhanced lived experience of our interconnectedness can't hurt and is likely to be a positive force.

"It's ironic that we flew there to discover the moon. What we really discovered is Earth."

Bill Anders (Apollo 8)

Meditations

Ecological breathing space

Focus:
Air to breathe and air quality

Materials:
Clock, space to sit, bell

Preparation:
Create a preferably disturbance-free environment

Time:
Aprox. 10 minutes

Instruction:

Three gentle bell chimes —— If it is comfortable for you, sit upright, close your eyes or focus on a spot in front of you on the floor … Observe your physical sensations, thoughts, emotions or anything else you comes into your awareness at the moment, not searching for anything or analyzing, but just, as well as possible, allowing things be as they are —— *Longer pause* —— Now notice where in your body you are aware of your breathing in and breathing out, maybe your belly, your chest or the area around the nostrils, and rest there, as best you can —— *Longer pause* —— See if you can just gently stay with your breath, however it feels, whether relaxed or tense, fast or slow, very regular or somewhat irregular in tempo or in depth —— *Longer pause* —— Now notice how the breath feels as it flows into your body, and how it feels when it flows out of your body: is the temperature the same when it enters versus when it exits your body? Is the speed with which the air flows the same during inspiration and expiration? How about the temperature? Does it taste the same? Are the sensations in your body similar or different between the inbreath and the outbreath? —— *Longer pause* —— Now expand your attention a little further outward and become aware that the air we breathe, and the oxygen and other substances it contains, are also being breathed together with all those other people present in the room —— *Longer pause* —— If your eyes have been closed so far, open them and let your gaze wander through the room, noticing the others but staying connected to your own breathing as best you can —— *Longer pause* —— Perhaps, close your eyes again and broaden your attention a little further without losing awareness of your own breathing in and out … Realize you are in a room in the middle of a town or a city … How does your breath feel now, calm or agitated, slow or fast, shallow or deep? —— *Longer pause* —— Now keep attending to your breathing, riding each breath like you might surf a wave with your body, and imagine you are in the middle of nature, either in a forest or on a beach —— *Longer pause* —— Notice how your breath feels now? —— *Longer pause* —— Now let go of being in that environment and imagine, instead, you are standing at a busy intersection of a large city … You see the gases escaping from the tailpipes of cars and gray smog hanging in the air, they reach your nose and all your senses … How does the inbreath and outbreath feel just now? Do you experience any change in mood, emotion, sense of wellbeing, thoughts or other mental states? Don't go searching, just notice what automatically arises in your awareness, if anything special —— *Longer pause* —— Now let go of all the images and thoughts that may have arisen with this imagination experiment, and bring awareness fully back to your body and the natural rhythm of your breathing in and out —— *Longer pause* —— For a moment, contemplate how your body felt during these diffferent conditions of awareness, awareness of others in the room, awareness of the woods or the beach, awareness of a busy city intersection? … What physical sensation and emotions arose within you? … What's going on inside you right now, as you try to reflect: are you still in the present moment or already far away with yours thoughts?

—— *Longer pause* —— Now let go of all contemplations for a moment and gently return to your breath here and now, relaxing as best you can or noticing whether you feel something else than relaxation —— *Longer pause* —— *Three gentle bell chimes* —— If your eyes are still closed, gently begin to open them and redirect your awareness more outwards … Pay gradually more attention to what you see around you … Maybe also try to experiment, remaining in touch with your body and breath, while returning to what is happening in the room.

Possible questions for the discussion afterwards:

What did you experience during the exercise?
Did you encounter any experience of interconnectedness between you and your real and imagined environments, or perhaps some other sense, even of isolation or alienation?
Are there topics that interest you and that we should deepen in class?

Tangerine exercise

Focus:
Sensory perception

Materials:
Tangerines or similar fruit for every student, space to sit, clock and bell

Preparation:
Each student receives a piece of fruit, optionally already with closed eyes

Time:
Aprox. 5–10 minutes

Instruction:

Three gentle bell chimes —— Find an upright but comfortable sitting position in which you think you can stay as relaxed as possible for the next 10 minutes … Close your eyes if you feel comfortable doing so and bring your attention to where your hands are now, how they and your fingers are positioned … Feel the object that has just been handed out, in your hand, first without moving it … How does it feel on your skin? What part of your hands makes contact and feels it? … How its weight is made known to your sensations? —— *Longer pause* —— Now let your fingers further explore the object by letting it move with your hands and fingers … what does the surface of the object feel like, is it warm or cold, how does the form of the object influence the way you move it as you touch it? —— *Longer pause* —— Whenever you notice that your mind has wandered off, just realized where you just were, and bring your awareness back to the awareness and feelings associated with this object in your hands … How does it feel right now? —— *Longer pause* —— Now if your eyes are still closed, keep them closed and carefully bring the object near your nose … How does it smell, is the fragrance constant or changing as you continue to smell it? Can you recognize different aspects of the odors that emerge for you, for example, sweet or bitter, sour or earthy? —— *Longer pause* —— Now slowly open your eyes and look at the object in your hand for a few moments, its color, shape and texture —— *Longer pause* —— Imagine the branch where this object, obviously a fruit, grew —— *Longer pause* —— The tangerine tree once planted by someone, watered, fertilized and cared for by farmers, perhaps using chemical fertilizers and pesticides, perhaps not … Visualize how this fruit grew from a blossom to a ripe fruit; the very moment when the tangerine was plugged from the tree by a worker, how and with whom it was brought to market to be sold or stored until it found its way to a supermarket … Imagine all the people who were involved in growing, marketing and selling this one tangerine you now hold in your hand. Maybe you can imagine how nature, with all its seasons, weather and other conditions, joined together with so many people to make it possible for you to have this tangerine in your hands at this very moment —— *Longer pause* —— Now slowly start preparing the item so that you can eat it, removing the skin so it can be

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ready for eating … Notice how your fingers and hands move as you peel the fruit, new odors as they may be emitted, the new sensations and substances that may come onto your fingers, the thoughts and feelings that may spontaneously arise as you peel the tangerine —— *Longer pause* —— When you're finished peeling and preparing the fruit to eat, please close your eyes again, if you are willing … Now lead one piece of the fruit to your mouth and just hold it between your lips … Feel the contact of the piece of fruit on your lips —— *Longer pause* —— Now, let the object slowly slide into your mouth and let it rest upon your tongue for a few moments without chewing … What happens in your mouth … What taste is already there? … At your own pace, slowly start chewing the item and swallow it after a while … What are the different flavors you notice? … Does the intensity of taste change as you chew and swallow? —— *Longer pause* —— What happens when you repeat this process with another piece of tangerine, either with eyes closed or eyes open? —— *Longer pause* —— *Three gentle bell chimes* —— Now if your eyes are still closed, begin to gently open them and redirect your awareness more outwards … Notice the room you are in and the other people … If you feel the need, end by stretching a bit with your body any way that feels good.

Possible questions for the discussion afterwards:

How did you experience your sense of taste?
Is this exercise different from your usual way of eating?
What kind of images could describe your inner mood?

Learning tasks

Ecological footprint

Focus:

Understanding the impact of consumption on natural resources and their ability to regenerate

Ability to contextualize individual consumption on a global level

Materials:

Selection of a suitable footprint calculator, e.g. www.footprintcalculator.org (English)

Preparation:

Provide internet connection for online-research

Time:

Aprox. 45–90 minutes

Instruction:

We know that our consumption of goods and services is linked to the consumption of natural resources. However, this consumption is often invisible and therefore difficult to grasp. The ecological footprint is an approach to measuring the ecological sustainability of our lifestyle. It calculates the area needed to produce the goods we consume and compares it with the area available on our planet. This gives us an indication of the extent to which our lifestyle can or will not be globally sustainable, i.e. transferable to all people worldwide.

- Search the Internet for information on the ecological footprint. Try to explain what the concept is, what the footprint means and how it is calculated.
- Calculate your own ecological footprint using a footprint calculator.
- Compare your ecological footprint with others in the learning group, the average of your country and a globally sustainable footprint.

Possible questions for the discussion afterwards:

What was new to you, what did you already know?
How did your research and footprint calculation go? Which feelings and thoughts emerged in you?
What could you do to reduce your ecological footprint?

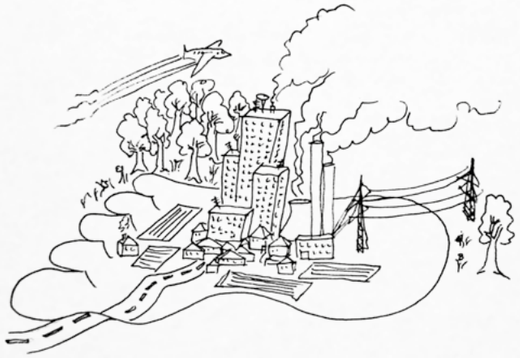

Illustration after http://www.see-change.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/origami-footprint-550-300x206.jpg

Choosing images

Adapted after Schelakovsky & Langer(2008)

Instruction:

Every day we are confronted with a huge number of images in the media, which give us impressions of the current state of the world. What does it do to us to be exposed to these images? What is our perspective on these global trends, what do we feel when we look at them, how do we perceive the changes on our planet and in our everyday lives?

- For a week, collect pictures that you encounter in everyday life and that express well for you what the state of the world today looks like and in which direction it is moving. Bring some pictures to the class as a printout.
- Place individual pictures on the floor and position yourselves around these pictures. Choose a picture that appeals to you the most. What exactly appeals to you about this picture? Describe your thoughts and feelings.
- Think about how you see the world today. What will it be like in 30 years? What world does the older generation leave to the younger generation? What do you feel and think when you follow these questions?

Write down your impressions in the form of short notes and share them in small groups.

Possible questions for the discussion afterwards:

Which pictures arouse positive feelings and thoughts, which negative ones?
Which hopeful images of the future do you miss and would you like to see?
What would you like to learn more about in class?

Focus:

Reflecting on one's own perspective on global trends

Clarification of own attitudes and feelings to these trends

Materials:

Bring pictures and images to class

Preparation:

If applicable/necessary, have learners bring their own pictures in advance

Time:

Aprox. 30–45 minutes

In everyday life

Mindful walk

Focus:

Movements of the body while walking, environment and surroundings around us

Materials:

Clothing suitable for the weather

Preparation:

If possible, choose a piece of natural surrounding to go for a walk

Time:

Aprox. 5–60 minutes

Instructions to perform the task independently:

Any place you can walk, and any distance from a few footsteps to a normal walk, is fine for the practice of mindful walking. Walking in a natural setting of beauty, the woods, a park or a meadow, is particularly conducive to the practice. Nevertheless, even the usual walk through the streets to school also works. Turn off your cell phone and walk in silence while you bring your awareness to the movements of your body. How does the ground feel under your feet, step by step? After a few minutes, perhaps invite yourself to expand your awareness to your surroundings and to the environment, whether a busy sidewalk, or a quiet park setting. How does it feel to be outside? Does the fresh air appear to affect your mood and emotions? How do the plants, trees, houses or cars whizzing by make you feel? It is important, especially if you are walking through the streets, that you always take care of your safety. If you want to, stop for a few moments now and then, close your eyes and just notice whatever you are feeling. What do you hear inside yourself? What can you hear outside of yourself? How does what is happening inside of you relate to what's happening around you? How do the inner world and the outer world relate to each other?

Possible questions for self-reflection:

Is mindful walking different from my usual way of walking?
How did I perceive the environment and surroundings around me?
Is there a relationship between the surroundings and the environment around me and my own state of mind?

Evaluation

Preliminary note: This chapter does not contain exercises like the previous modules, but invites you to evaluate the experiences and learning progress you have made with the use of this toolkit in the learning group. For many learners, perhaps also for you, working with this toolkit might have been the first contact with mindfulness practice. In the following we present three different approaches with which you can evaluate your work with the toolkit: Individual evaluation, group evaluation and measurement of changes. Although each of the three approaches represents its own approach, they can also be combined without any problems.

Individual evaluation

The individual evaluation aims to encourage learners to reflect on the experiences and explore their effects.

Reflective questions

One possibility are simple reflection questions after the exercises have been completed:

- What experiences have you had with the exercises in the group and at home?
- Do you feel that the exercises you have done have changed something for you in one way or another? (If so: which were they and what has changed?)

Letters to yourself

Another proven method for stimulating reflection processes is the letter to oneself: Before starting to work with the toolkit, learners are asked to write themselves a short letter and date it. In this letter, the person of the present writes to the "future self" about concrete questions – for example about their own consumer behaviour, about attitudes and values or about expectations of the coming experience with working with the toolkit. The closed envelopes can then be read by learners after working with the toolkit and provide an opportunity to reflect on developments and recognize changes.

Group evaluation

Group discussions are an important element in the toolkit to stimulate the sharing of individual experiences with mindfulness practice. The group discussion as a practice (cultivated further through the exercises of this toolkit) can also be used as an evaluation approach.

Key questions-oriented group discussion

- How do I feel after the exercises (physically, emotionally, mentally)?
- How did I perceive the experiences I have just had? Is something different? If so, what?

Associative group discussion

In addition to the key questions, associative methods can also be used to stimulate reflection processes beyond one's own mindfulness experience, which go beyond the conceptual-rational level. One such procedure is image or object evaluation. Here, images with very different motives or objects are distributed in the middle of the room. Learners are then asked to select an image or object that most closely matches what they have learned through the exercises, for example. The choice of the image or object and what it expresses for the person can then be discussed together.

Measurement of changes

Changes can also be observed and measured – for example through the use of questionnaires. Such scientifically based methods have the advantage that they allow a direct comparison – between different points in time (before / after), between different people (within the same / between different learning groups) and between different periods (short-term / long-term effects).

To measure changes over time, a questionnaire should be used twice: once before the beginning of meditation practice and once after the end of practice (immediately afterwards or later, e.g. after 8 weeks, 3 months or a school semester, if long-term changes are to be considered). There are several ways to use them:

- Self-assessment: learners complete the questionnaire themselves.
- External evaluation: The questionnaire is completed for the learner by a person who knows the learner well (e.g. friend, teacher).

At **http://ifan-berlin.de/mindfulness-and-consumption** you will find questionnaires that can be used as templates to measure sustainable consumption behaviour (in relation to food and clothing) and material value orientations among young people. Simple instructions for evaluating the questionnaires are also available there.

If the questionnaires are completed anonymously, it can be helpful to use a personal code for each questionnaire, so that each questionnaire can later be clearly assigned to a person.

Work in progress: another reminder on our own behalf

This toolkit itself is an expression and interim result of an ongoing learning process in which we experiment with the introduction of mindfulness practice into educational work on sustainable consumption. We are very interested in getting to know your comments, assessments and considerations. Please send us your comments at http://ifan-berlin.de/mindfulness-and-consumption.

Thank you very much!

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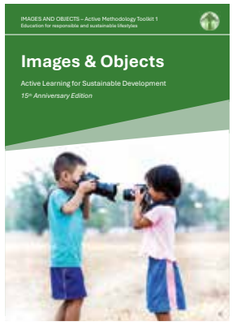

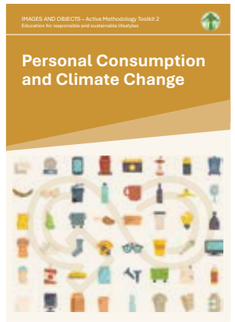

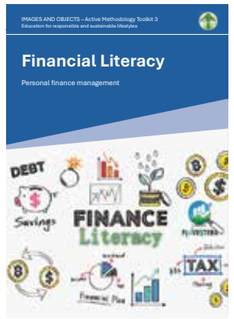

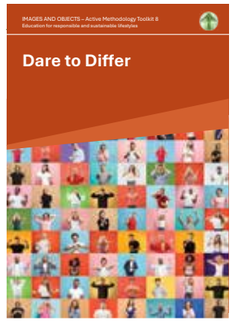

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“It can make consumption more a matter of choice than of impulse clouded by the illusion of choice.”

Erika L. Rosenberg