

The Seven Attitudes of Mindfulness Practice¹ in Relationship to Coaching

Mindfulness Attitude	Relationship to Coaching
<p>Non-judging When practicing mindfulness, invite the quality of impartial witness. We tend to react to our experiences in terms of what we think their value is (i.e. good/bad, more/less). The attitude of non-judgment implies simply observing our experience without adding an interpretation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Towards myself as much as the client • Staying curious; implies being open to what is (linked to <i>beginner's mind</i> and <i>non-striving</i>) • Especially important when assessing the client and situation: observations not interpretations
<p>Patience To be patient is to be completely open to each moment, accepting it in its fullness. Patience brings with it understanding that things must unfold in their own time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeds take time to spout; a bloom can't be forced • Patience helps create the environment for these things to happen
<p>Beginner's Mind Attempt to do your practice each day as if for the first time, free from expectations based on your past experiences. Notice when you are letting your thinking and beliefs about what you "know" prevent you from seeing things as they really are. Bring your "beginner's mind" to your everyday activities, allowing yourself to see freshly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self awareness, cultural perspective • Thoughts, feelings & beliefs determine ones perceived choices for action • (see <i>non-judgment</i>) • 'knowing' is contextual • We don't know what we don't know • The use of art processes can be helpful to open up new perspectives and interpretations
<p>Trust In practicing mindfulness, you are practicing taking responsibility for being yourself and learning to listen to and trust your own wisdom. This attitude is particularly useful in yoga as you learn to trust and respond to the messages your body is giving you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal mastery: "to be vs. to appear to be" • Authenticity: relaxed confidence • Centered and whole • Aligned & integrated • "yoga" could be the intervention and "body" the system's responses
<p>Non-striving The ultimate "goal" in a mindfulness practice is for you to be yourself. The irony is that you already are. Non-striving implies being in the practice without an emphasis on doing. This requires letting go of notions of how things <i>should</i> be and relating to how things <i>are</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being vs. doing • Use of intention and energy • Working with resistance • Through relationship building – to support, witness, reflect

¹ Adapted from: Jon Kabat-Zinn "Full Catastrophe Living" and Mindfulness Course notes

<p>Acceptance Acceptance is a willingness to be with things as they are. Practice taking each moment as it comes and being fully present to it, without imposing your ideas of how it should be or how you want it to be.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses resistance issues • Sometimes I see acceptance as giving up, surrendering rather than as flowing with and full of useful information (see: Gestalt view of Resistance) • Seeing shades of gray vs. only black or white (hope/despair); and/both vs. either/or thinking
<p>Letting Go Letting go of what the mind clings to. Let go of things needing to be a certain way, or needing to be pleasant. Let go of the impulse to push away certain thoughts or feelings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As with acceptance, freeing up energy to be whole and present to what is • Letting go of expectations around knowing, fixing, helping, and doing • Staying open

Personal reflections:

What is not mentioned here is the Mindfulness practice of clarifying ones intention before embarking on any journey or action. This fits with the Systems Thinking literature which emphasizes the importance of beginning with a sense of 'vision', a picture of what you or the system are working towards, what it wants to be, wants to look like. When matched with an awareness of what the current reality is, the creative tension that is created helps us notice opportunities that will help for moving forward.

These attitudes help to address readiness and sustainability issues in a client desiring to make a sustainable change in their lives. They help create the conditions for self awareness and effective relationship building. Practice of these seven attitudes supports the belief that the client must take ownership of the process. It also helps the coach be more fully present to the client in a way that helps avoid dependency creation.