

## **Making Wise Decisions**

The concept of acting mindfully and making wise decisions runs throughout mindfulness literature and practice.

The first step in achieving this is to be aware of your thoughts, emotions and sensations, to view them as transient and to view them as passing mental events.

The next stage is to be able to bring yourself into the moment and from this perspective you can see a range of alternatives in how to respond. You are not just reacting automatically to your experiences rather you can choose to respond. This is making a wise decision.

### **Three states of mind**

Linehan M. '93 describes three states of mind: emotion mind, reason mind and wise mind.

The emotion and reason mind can be helpful or unhelpful depending on the situation. Emotion mind is when emotions are driving our behaviour, whereas reason mind is the logical, rational part of ourselves. It can be useful to think in terms of thoughts and behaviour coming from the heart (emotion) or coming from the head (reason).

Step 1: Learn to be able to recognise which state of mind you are in.

To do this learn to recognise the clues for your emotion mind and your reason mind. You can notice these clues by observing:

- The words you tend to say to yourself.
- The body posture you adopt.
- Your facial expressions.
- Your tones of voice (both internal and external)

Step 2: Once you have learnt to recognise both the emotion and the reason mind the next step is to learn to move flexibly between them. Often you can find this by changing your body posture or taking a step to one side, and answer the question, "What would the other mind say?"

### **Wise Mind**

Wise mind takes into account both the emotion mind and reason mind perspectives. It is a felt sense (Linehan M., '93)

Steps to a wise mind

- Pause
- Ask, which mind am I in?
- Ask, what would the other mind say?
- Ask, what feels wise?
- Be prepared to keep trying until it feels wise.
- Give it time.
- Locate where your experience of being wise is located in your body.
- Go over the steps more than once if required.

## **Modes of mind**

In mindfulness based on cognitive theory (MBCT) different modes of mind are identified:

A) Doing mode, B) Being mode.

These do not map directly onto Linehan's states of mind but there are similarities.

- 1) Identify which mode you are in.
- 2) To move flexibly between them.
- 3) Both can be helpful/unhelpful depending on the situation.

Doing and Being mode have different functions.

### **A. Doing Mode**

- Monitors discrepancies between how they are and how we want or don't want them to be (Segal et al '02).
- It activates problem solutions to reduce this discrepancy.
- It is goal focused.
- Largely thinking based
- Often our attention is on the future or the past.
- Very effective to help you solve problems.

### **B. Being Mode**

In this mode the attention is to experiencing the moments in all five senses

- Smell
- Touch
- Sight
- Hearing
- Taste

Being mode is not just about being in the reality of pleasant events but also being present in neutral distress or unpleasant events, it is about allowing into awareness our direct experience of all that life brings. Furthermore being mode is not just experiencing our internal environment but also our external environment but also our external environment with info taken in through our senses.

When in Being Mode we unhook from the attachment to outcome and acknowledge how they are. It necessitates letting go of our minds commentary on the present in favour of involving ourselves in the direct experience of it.

Aim: to be able to intentionally switch from one mode to the other so that we can make wise choices about how to respond to situations.

Note: each mode is helpful and unhelpful to us depending on the situation. The skill is to recognise each one and to be able to move flexibly between them.

**Effectiveness:**

1. Be mindful of the situation as it is.
2. Recognise the range of possibilities open to you and choose the wise response.

In deciding whether we are taking the effective path, ask yourself:

- Is this effective for me
- Is this getting me closer or further away from where I want to be?

**Obstacles and being effective**

- Intense emotion- e.g. being angry/not listening
- Certain thoughts- e.g. "I may as well give up" "it's impossible"
- Practical problem, not having the correct equipment and carry out the task
- A common obstacle to being effective in being unmindful of the task.

---

The Counselling and Personal Development Service, Dublin City University.

Website: [www.dcu.ie/students/counselling](http://www.dcu.ie/students/counselling)

E-mail: [counselling@dcu.ie](mailto:counselling@dcu.ie)

Phone: 01 - 7005165