

MINDFULNESS FOR TINNITUS

Dr. Peter Vernezz

1. You should devote one week to each class
2. Please note the (A1), (A2), (A3) etc refers to the material in the Appendix (available in the course material section).
3. Also, the meditations are available at <https://therapistwithtinnitus.com/meditations/>
4. Links to supplemental video are on the course homepage at www.therapistwithtinnitus.com

CLASS ONE: MINDFULNESS AND TINNITUS

Description: Tinnitus distress is a product not of the sound of our tinnitus but of the way our body and our mind are responding to the sound. Mindfulness allows us to work with the physical and mental response to tinnitus in a way that sets us on the path towards habituation. You are introduced to the practice of formal meditation. The connection between mindfulness and meditation is explored. We focus on the fundamental meditation skill of concentration and discuss its role in habituation as well as explore the difference between formal and informal mindfulness practices.

- 1.1 Mindfulness and Tinnitus
- 1.2 Meditation and Tinnitus (13:05)
- 1.3 Concentration (36:05)
- 1.4: Informal Mindfulness (51:40)

Home Practice Notes [Meditation Log (A1), Pausing in Awareness (A2), Tinnitus Log (A3)]

Forma Practice: This week you are asked to begin with twenty minutes of daily meditation practice. You have two 10-minute guided practices. The first one [**Finding Anchor**] is a practice where you are attempting to keep your attention focused on a particular spot (anchor). Although the breath is a common anchor, this does not work for everyone, and you are urged to explore where in or out of the body is a good anchor for your attention. You are then just noticing when the attention wanders off and bringing your attention back to the anchor.

The second practice [**Concentration**] involves working with one specific anchor and using it as the focus from which to develop concentration. A third practice [**Anchor plus Counting**] adds the practice of counting to enhance concentration. Follow the meditation schedule provided.

Informal Practice: Your first informal mindfulness practice is pausing in awareness. The directions are simple. At several preset times in your day, you simply stop and pay attention to where you are and what you are experiencing, with an emphasis on the experience of the five senses. Do this 3-5 times a day for somewhere between 30 seconds and two minutes. It is important to realize that informal mindfulness practice involves the same steps as formal mindfulness practice: you place attention on your present moment experience, your attention wanders off, you notice it and bring it back to the present. Make at least one of these involve your tinnitus, and record your physical sensations, emotions and thoughts on the chart provided.

(2) At least once a day, notice your tinnitus and write down your reaction to it in terms of (a) thoughts, (b) physical sensations, and (c) emotions

Supplemental Material: Watch “Fly and Samurai” video

CLASS TWO: THOUGHT AND TINNITUS DISTRESS

Description: In this class we focus on the role that our thoughts play in our tinnitus distress. Thoughts constitute what is known as the second arrow of suffering. Our thoughts about whatever condition we are undergoing (for example, tinnitus) are a source of suffering distinct from the condition. While classic Cognitive Behavior Therapy would have us challenge and replace our thoughts, mindfulness works with thoughts through observing them and letting them, recognizing that if we don’t get hooked into a thought it will cease to trouble us. We begin to develop the skill of observation as a way of working with working skillfully with these negative thoughts. In addition, we will expand the range of our informal mindfulness practices and discuss the connection between formal and informal mindfulness practices and our tinnitus.

Audio

2.1 Thoughts as a Source of Tinnitus Distress

2.2 CBT vs Mindfulness (19:58)

2.3 Informal Mindfulness Practice (32:40)

HOME PRACTICE NOTES [Meditation Log (A1), Informal Mindfulness (A4)]

Formal Practice: This week we are adding the skill of observation to the practice of concentration. So you have a short noting practice [**Noting and the Body**] to help you train this skill. I suggest that you alternate this short noting practice with one of the practices from week 1. We will also begin to observe not only thoughts but the body in the **Rotation of Awareness** meditation. In this practice you will be placing your attention on various objects: your breath, your body, sound, your thoughts, and what is known as choiceless awareness. Here you are simply expanding upon the skill issue already developed using both concentration to keep focused on the specific anchor - - be it your body, thought, breath - -and observation as you notice when your attention wanders away from the anchor and you observe, name and note, and bring the attention back to the anchor.

Informal Practice: This week you will begin in earnest working with informal mindfulness practice. You are asked to choose a particular informal practice at least one a day and record your thoughts, your emotions, in your physical sensations were your engaged in the informal mindfulness practice. Be sure to pay attention to the similarities between these informal mindfulness practices and the formal mindfulness practices. In each case you are placing your attention - - concentrating - -on the present moment be it the breath in the body if meditating or the temperature and pressure of the water if taking a shower. Your attention will invariably wander off from the object of focus and you notice and bring the attention back to the present. You do the same thing whether in informal or formal practice. Hence, the idea is life becomes a meditation 24/7. If our attention is focused on present moment sense experience, it cannot be paying attention to our catastrophic thoughts about tinnitus and hence we suffer less.

Supplemental Material: Watch “Your Thoughts are Bubbles” video

CLASS 3: TINNITUS AND THE BODY

Description: This week we will examine the body as a separate source of tinnitus distress. Research tells us that the nervous system of those with tinnitus is in more of an activated state (fight or flight) than those without tinnitus. Hence, to work with the physical side of tinnitus distress, we need tools and techniques to bring the body out of this activated state. After a review of the basics of the nervous system and the impact that tinnitus can have on the nervous system, you will learn practices to help you bring the body out of sympathetic activation (fight or flight). We will specifically focus on the breath as a device by which you can gain control over the nervous system and how you respond to your tinnitus. You will also be introduced to mindfulness strategies from the world of chronic pain that can be useful in handling tinnitus distress.

Videos

3.1 Tinnitus and the Nervous System

3.2 Calming the body part 1: Body Scan (13:13)

3.3 Calming the body part 2: breath (28:19)

3.4 Chronic pain and Tinnitus (41:58)

Home Practice Notes: [Meditation Log [A1], Working with the Senses [A5]

Formal Practice: You are continuing to develop your concentration and observation capacities in meditation and in your informal practices. The **Body Scan meditation** is introduced as part of your regular practice this week. Its goal is to begin to familiarize yourself with your bodily sensations. Often, we find ourselves upset or angry by our tinnitus without even realizing our body has been triggered for some time. If we had been listening to our body, we might have been able to use some calming or breathing practices to get it under control. Use the body scan as a way to begin to develop a sensitivity to your bodily states. It is recommended you practice it

every other day this week. Note that there are two versions. You should alternate it with twenty minutes of **Rotation of Awareness** meditation. In addition, do at least five minutes of breathing practice, combining paced breathing and the 4-7-8 practice.

Informal Practice: I would like you to focus your informal practices on working with pleasant sense experiences throughout your day, but especially at times when you are distressed by tinnitus. You don't have to do each sense every day. Focusing on pleasant sense experiences is a skill we can develop.

Supplemental Material: Watch “Change Your Breath, Change Your Life” and “4-7-8” video

CLASS 4: TINNITUS AND THE EMOTIONS

Description: Many of us have mistaken views about our emotions. We think we are at the mercy of our emotions, including our emotions regarding tinnitus. But in fact, since emotions are a combination of body and thought, and we have a modicum of control over each of these, we do ultimately have much more control over our emotions than we believe. In this session you will begin to learn how to work with negative emotions in order to increase your ability to tolerate them as well as how to begin to generate more positive emotions. Both of these skills are essential in developing a healthy attitude towards tinnitus.

Videos

4.1: What Emotions are and Ways of working with distressing emotions

4.2 Generating Positive Emotions Defense vs Offense with distressing emotions (17:18)

4.3: Equilibrium (29:09)

Home Practice Notes [Meditation Log (A1), Positive Psychology Exercises (A6)]

Formal Practice: I introduce the **Loving Kindness Practice** this week. This practice has been the focus of numerous research studies which have demonstrated its capacity to increase our overall sense of well-being. The idea is simple. We wish good things for ourselves, those who we love, those who we are acquainted with, including those who we like, those we are neutral towards and those who we dislike, and ultimately to all beings. Through this practice we generate positive emotions throughout our day. Although we will do a longer version of this, many people include a short loving kindness meditation as part of their daily meditation practice. This week you will be altering a loving kindness practice with either a body scan or a rotation meditation. Also, try to do the **RAIN meditation** at least once.

Informal Practice The handout this week has the three practices I discussed on the video. Your goal is to pick one of these practices to work on this week.

Supplemental Material: Watch “You are not at the Mercy of Your Emotions” and “Light Rain”

NB: If you have questions about the exercises you can contact me at peter@therapsitwithtinnitus.com I will get back to you as soon as possible

