

compassionate activism

Session 3 Video Transcription

Sandra: Great. Thank you everyone for coming to this is our third session of Compassion Activism. Today we're going to really the heart, the heart of stuff which is practice of gentle mindfulness and compassion self-accountability. This is probably ... They are all really important practices, but this is also a really key, this is foundational practice as well, but before we get to that third practice of gentle mindfulness and compassion and self-accountability, I just want to get through and see if anybody has any questions.

Do folks have any questions back from the first session? We talked about humility and curiosity as well as the second practice of distinguishing reality and acknowledging external reality. I'm just going to video right now so that people can see each other's faces as we talk. Yeah, the question is do people want to share anything from what came out from them between the last session and now or questions they had?

Josette: Yeah. Liz, you can go ahead. Oh sorry. You're on it.

Liz: Thanks. Yeah this is it. I don't think it's a question, but maybe there's a question in here. When we were pointing out assumptions with our partner that might be impacting their felt experience of a particular situation. I realized I felt some sort of eekiness around that and I can't figure out the word to describe it. Later I realized my partner in that exercise was a black woman and I'm a white person and it felt despite attempting to validate where those assumptions might be coming from, that I might be another white person just saying like your experiences are ... Maybe that's not what's actually happening in this situation.

It reminded me of, as a woman, trying to share something with a man or something that happens and them saying "Well are you sure that's really what was happening." And yeah, I just wanted to point that out that, I don't know if other people had that experience. I see the value in trying to gently work with each other and see where we might be making assumptions. Does this make any sense? I'm feeling shy about saying this, but it just felt important to acknowledge.

Sandra: Great. Let me know if I'm getting this right. When you're having the conversation around and you're trying to distinguish from what assumptions you're making about the other person and what was actually happening. Was that the exercise?

Liz: Right. Right.

Sandra: This one more time by distinguishing realities?

Liz: Right. Yeah.

Sandra: Actually what you experience in terms of that eekiness of realizing oh where am I coming from? Are these actually biases or prejudice and stereotypes and that felt really uncomfortable and weird? Is that what was going on?

Liz: No. I don't think so. No, it was more — I don't want to share this person's story either, but when I was trying to say was that your assumption that you were making in this scenario or this situation... Do you know that's what that other person was actually thinking? I was trying to point out an assumption that she brought her story, but it felt like it reminded me of situations where a person of color was trying to tell a white person, "Oh I have this experience and I think it was racist." And then the white person is like, "Well how do you know it was racist?"

Or as a woman trying to tell a man, hey, if somebody does something sexist not like how do you know it was really sexist and it's like, well, I guess I don't know a 100%, but I feel it in my body a lot of times. I guess I just want to name that and I don't know if there is a question in that, maybe that's just part of this process, especially for working with people that don't match our identities 100%, which is inevitable, but I just don't want to be perpetuating harm. And so it felt, yeah... I don't know. I just wanted to voice it I guess.

Sandra: Yeah. No. That makes a lot of sense and I think in the comments it's like a bunch of other people felt very similar to you. I'm not saying that's unusual what you experience. To clarify, what we're trying to do is distinguish between what was happening in external reality versus people's internal realities. This session is about getting in touch with our internal realities. Which is, what is the impact of that external reality of those words and those actions having been said and done, right?

In the second session where we're talking about was really what exactly was said and done. Not that what people were experiencing and so when making assumption about the other person, it is getting confusing now because we're talking about other people and other people. Let's just say Liz, you're talking to somebody named Betsy and Betsy was talking about Paula. Just to make it easier with names.

When Betsy was talking about what happened with Paula, what assumptions Betsy was making about Paula and based on what Paula said were assumptions, that doesn't mean that they were necessarily false or inaccurately accurate. We don't know yet. It's very possible they are true. We just don't know that yet.

Liz: I tried to acknowledge that. I tried to say I think your assumptions vulnerably valid and maybe they were true, but still I just ... I don't know. We have to spend a whole lot of time. I don't want to.

Sandra: No. I think it's a great distinction because Betsy's experience, internal experience of how those words impacted her were real and she can get in touch with that. She can know if she actually gets in touch with it. With Paula, she doesn't know it for sure until she asks Paula, but for her own experience of how she experienced it as either a form of racism or micro aggression, it's sexism, its whatever it may have been for her, that's her own reality and that's valid and that it is what it is.

This is a tricky distinction being made. Just because you can be unsure, you can be, you can see your speculation about somebody else's speculation, doesn't mean that you treat your own internal experience as speculation. You treat your own experience as real as it is. It is what it is. Does that make sense?

Liz: Yeah.

Sandra: I see like a couple other folks had a similar other experience in chats so if you have any other questions about that please pop up because I think this is a really key thing and I think you're concerned about not wanting to be basically gas lighting the other person, right? You don't want to be another person undermining only of what they're experiencing. That is excellent. Thank you for raising it.

Liz: Yeah. Exactly. Thanks.

Sandra: Does somebody else want to have any questions or still is unclear about that distinction? Just as a question or somebody asked.

Josette: Yes. Freya asked can we go into a specific example. Sandra can you use a hypothetical scenario and clarifying gas lighting.

Sandra: Right. I'll do gas lighting first. Gas lighting is when people try to undermine your own understanding of your own experiences. Classic example, say you experience something sexist. Someone says, oh, but that's ... Somebody was like, oh what he said was harmful to you and it's like that wasn't harmful to you though. That's somebody you're trying to ... They don't know your own experience better than you.

Somebody trying to tell us to override your experience and tell you what you had felt, that's gas lighting. You're your own understanding of your own reality. Does that makes sense with gas lighting? People will deny it, minimize it. Basically tell that what you said you experienced, was not real. That will be gas lighting. In terms of an exact example, let me think of one. Say I'm walking down the street and somebody walks by me and they give me this really hard look just like this intense hard look and this has happened to me before.

When I've been in different areas where predominately white and there's a why are you here suspicious kind of look. Why would I get that look just walking down the street? I'm just minding my own business. There is lots of different reasons why that could have happened. One of them could be because I'm not white, there is and that's offended to

people sometimes in certain areas and so my experience of that is that it's reminded me all times that I've felt othered. That I've felt like I don't belong here because I'm not white and at the same time I don't know exactly why that person gave me that look and did that.

To give you a real life example, I used to live in Brooke, West Virginia which is predominately white community. Almost no folks. Predominantly white and then there's some black folks, but there's almost no Asian folks. There's a very, very few immigrants. Me and my family were there. My family was visiting. It was about 4 of us in the car and we drove off to a place near my home and we got out and started walking and I saw this guy, this guy in front of us.

He kept turning around as we parked and got the car and he saw us get out of the car, the 5 of us, he turned around and started walking back and I noticed that he has shotgun in his hand. He was looking at us pretty hard and real serious and real, real hard look. He gets closer and he's like where are you all from? West Virginia is oftentimes in this ... They don't actually usually ask us where from we're at, they ask us where you live. Being used to that I said, we live down the street over here and he was like oh, okay. You live over there. All right.

I was really concerned because I saw the 5 of you get out of the car and didn't know who you were. I got a little concerned. That's why I came back. In my head I'm like you're the one with the gun, but that's what was going on for him. He just saw because it's a small community so everybody pretty much knows everybody. He saw 5 people get out of a car, he did not know them, but once I was like yeah I used to live down the road he was like okay. All good.

You have a good walk now. Just saying you don't know until you ask, but the fact that he turned around, he had a gun and us being nonwhite folks living in West Virginia where of course like everyone in this country, there's also racism happening, It could have gone down in various ways and various reasons behind it. My own experience of feeling othered in that moment was not invalid. It still happened.

It also just wasn't really grounded necessarily in the actual exchange of what was going on between me and him once we actually had an exchange which thankfully I was able to find out, right? What was going on for him? I was able to communicate and ask. Does that make sense? Was that a helpful example? Okay. Anybody else have any other questions?

Josette: Lorraine posed a question. Lorraine asked, I think being able to put aside our feelings and reactions in order to approach with humility and curiosity is really hard. I can come up with questions that seem neutral, but I can hear some feelings in my voice. Thoughts?

Sandra: Right. When we approach the situation with humility and curiosity, that doesn't mean that we set aside our feelings. That doesn't mean that we set aside our

reactions. They are still there. What coming up to something being that this is my reaction, this is my feelings and I may not know everything that's going on including with myself, and probably with the other person and so I want to better understand. I want to know what else is going on with myself and possibly with the other person.

It doesn't mean that we get rid of our feelings. It just means that we're not held in the grips with them and we're not treating them like the ultimate truth. That has pushed at every other possibility. Including the reality of the other person. First and foremost when you are in an emotionally charged place, who you have a responsibility is to yourself. Let's say for one I want to really emphasize that, is that we have who you need to take care off and who you need to communicate with in emotionally charged situations, first and foremost is definitely yourself. It's not with the other person.

Once you do it for yourself, then you have the opportunity to choose to do it with somebody else, and it's because you're taking care of yourself, it's likely it will be far less charged for you, but it's really just an opportunity. You have the option of communicating with somebody else, as opposed to you having responsibility to work it out with the other person. There's very valid reasons why you may choose not to at that moment in time.

Sometimes maybe due to physical risk, sometimes economics or your boss. Sometimes you're still not emotionally in a place where it's just going to be really taxing and teach us, we be more over toil that you really want to take on at that point, which is totally valid. This is where it gets back to being in touch with where you are and what do you need, and taking care of yourself first and foremost. Any other questions?

Josette: Feel free to unmute and talk, and for those who are on the phone, unmute is *6.

Speaker 1: Hi, is someone going ahead?

Sandra: There we go.

Speaker 1: Okay, I'm in a cafe so I'm going to try to talk quietly. Can you guys hear me?

Sandra: Yeah we can.

Speaker 1: Good, so I had a really heated exchange yesterday and I was so glad to be doing this course today to think about it. One of the things we talked about last time was the check in with self first. This guy was yelling at me, and I was requesting not to have this conversation. He wanted to have a discussion. By discussion, he meant he yell at me his opinions about the way things actually are in his views and that's the way it is, and totally dismissing mine, totally not even hearing them.

I was like, "I actually just don't want to have this discussion with you." Which really made him mad, like super mad that I didn't want to. He goes like, "You're dismissing me." I was like, "No, I just don't want to have this discussion with you right now, I'm out here enjoying my time and it's quiet and it's nice, and you're just yelling at me, and you're not having a discussion, it's a one way thing." He just kept yelling and yelling and he kept going on and on and on.

I came again to this place where I'm very aware, very calm, and I'm making the choice to yell back. To raise it up, to put force, to get him to stop or go away or just cut it out. He could have asked, I've directly pinpointed on what he's talking about his points and I've said things and he will not stop. This has happened many, many times, where it just keeps going and going and there's that aggravation. I just finally make the choice to raise it up and started yelling to make to make it stop.

One of the things that I realized and as other people were talking here a minute ago and as you were talking Sandra. What I've been doing and why I'm taking this course is, that is a tool, and it's a valid tool and it works, but I would rather some other tools. I'd like to maybe have some discussion on some of those other tools when someone's being ... I use aggravating in the verb sense as well. They're aggravating the situation. They're aggravating me, they're aggravating and escalating. Some other tools besides yelling to get them to stop.

One of the points that I said over and over and over was, "I have the right to say no to you. I have the right to not have this discussion with you. I have the right to tell you to stop yelling at me, and you are disrespecting me." You think, and it felt very, very, very sexist, very sexist, but he would never treat a man like this. Yelling at me, coming up to me to yell at me his opinion about this stupid, his ideas on the world, but he has absolutely no training in.

Yeah, so if we could go into or maybe through the sessions to specifically talk about the other tools in the toolbox. It's my points.

Sandra: Quick question. What is your relationship? Do you work with him or is he a personal relationship?

Speaker 1: The specifics of that was I was ... I have what's called a wilderness pass, so there's these HI, you know the HI International Hostels?

Sandra: I just want to know, is there a power dynamic?

Speaker 1: Okay, kind of yes. Okay, I see. He's the manager at the camp, the hostel I was staying at. The hostel closed for 3 weeks and he invited me to stay to do my writing, but also asked me to work for him, just to help out around for a few hours a day to stay. I've already paid for this pass to let me stay at different ones. There's kind of a power dynamic and kind of not.

I'm actually really questioning taking it up and reporting this to the managers, because there was a few other things he did that I don't find they're appropriate. Yeah, that's a tough one. It's like, do I just leave it? I don't believe in walking away from these things, that's not how society changes, so yeah.

Sandra: That's an option. Right? That's an option.

Speaker 1: That's one.

Sandra: I think what you're talking about, so the 5th part, so by the way this like a ... The 5 practices is like this really long drawn out thing in terms of these sessions. They could happened in very ... Dragging them out, so we can go deep into each of them. I would say that what you can do is the 5th option which is 5th practice of non-corporation.

Non-corporation means that you have both gotten ... Ideally, you would've understood where he's coming from and his perspective, and then he would have understand where you are coming from and your perspectives. Then from there, you can meet somewhere in the middle and co-create something through sharing and visioning. Say that's not possible and you can't come to a yes.

Then you can practice non-corporation, which means that you choose not to engage in this way without making them wrong as a human being. You can wish that they would do whatever work they need to do, to be in a place where he can reconnect with you and around this issue and the situation, and leave it at that.

You don't have to continue to talk to him, that's why I was asking about the power dynamic, because there are certain situations, say they're your boss, or you got ... There is where it gets trickier, but if there's no boss like relationship, you can just not engage. You cannot just talk to him, and walk away actually without there being really that much repercussions to you.

You can also have the option of going above him as you said and talk to his manager, because likely that he treats you this way, it's possible he treats other people that way, and so he's not doing a good job. It's not actually a bad thing that you're talking to his manager. He's supposed to create a welcoming environment at the hostel, and he's not. He's not doing his job properly.

You're very much within your rights, very legitimate to go and give that feedback. He's doing a bad job. Then it's the responsibility of his manager to handle that situation, it's not yours. You can let it go at that point. Did that sound helpful?

Josette: That was a follow up question.

Speaker 1: Yeah, I got it.

Josette: Sorry, from ... Are you adventurous 42? Okay, great if you want to read them out that would be great.

Speaker 1: Okay, so what I just asked was, so for me walking away from situations something I really don't believe in unless I have to. I did this eventually got up and walked away, but I try not to because I really strongly believe abusers and in a situation like this, we often say, just walk away, but then what you're doing is creating a space where abusers have the safe space, abusers have the home, abusers have the comfort to stay where I wanted to be, where people want to be, and I have the right to be.

I personally have found those so hard, because I was taught to walk away from things all the time. I'd rather fight to have my space, to have my safety, but so the question is, what are some specifics? Somebody is yelling blah, blah, blah. Do I just not engage? Just ignore them and have to sit there and have my time wasted and my body impacted by this yelling? What are some of those tools that you would say is non-engagement? That's exactly what I was asking.

Sandra: Right, I think actually what you were saying makes sense, you stated your right to be there. You had paid for it, and you don't deserve to be yelled at, and you asked him to stop, right? You could tell him, you're going to tell his manager, and you can tell his manager. The manager has the responsibility to handle the situation.

I don't think you physically walking away, and talking to the manager is like letting him off the hook, because it's actually going to somebody who has the responsibility, who has the power to make a difference in it. Like formally has the power. In terms of, I think you did, the most that one can do is make a request. The most one can do is assert their own reality and make a request to the other person.

You could also invite the other person to share their reality, but in a calm way, a way that doesn't involve them trying to tell you what your experience has been like, that is one possibility you could do. I don't know if this person is really good, you could tell. I don't know what he's upset about, quite honest. Then there's a technique where somebody comes at you very upset, and you talk to them really calmly, and you're like "Oh, tell me more. What do you mean by that? Tell me more." You have to come at them with that level of emptiness for that to be effective.

What it does, is it will actually ... A lot of folks actually do get calmer and calmer and calmer if you keep asking to explore their own reality, why they're feeling what they're feeling. Tell me more, what do you mean by that, but coming to them with nothing in that conversation, with none of that emotional charge. That is a very effective technique, but you have to be emotionally there to do that.

Getting there is the harder part, which is what we're going to talk more about how to do in today's session. I've also been in situations with people who are tremendous yellers. I come from a yelling family, an angry yelling family. Sometimes it's a happy yelling family,

sometimes it's an angry yelling family. I was living with my uncle at one point after graduating from college. He's a very big angry, flustering at times, violent person.

I was going out, and he said to me, he said, "You know that I'm really scary when I'm angry, don't you? I'm really scary when I'm mad." I looked at him. I was like, "I know uncle. I'm going to give you a kiss, so bye, I'll see you later." He never tried that again with me. By non-corporation, it can look like that. Also a different relationship with me, he's my uncle, I understand where he's coming from and why he does what he does.

I have a lot of compassion and understanding, and it allows me to not let his anger infect me. It's like I hold his ... What he's doing is distinct from what I'm experiencing, because I know how to relate to life, what happens to me. That's independent of what he's doing. That's not quite a skill that most people have, so I'm going to try to teach today.

All right, so I would like to move on unless we have something pressing here. No, okay. I do want to say, you can try to engage. We haven't gone through practice number 4, which is consciousness raising inquiry, which is something that you could do that would be an alternative to just leaving and talking to the manager, the way of communicating with them through conscious raising inquiry. We haven't gotten to that one yet, but asking him, "What do you mean by that? Tell me more, tell me more, let help me understand."

If you want to do that you can do that, but if it's going to be very emotionally taxing for you, you do not need to. You do not have responsibility to either to, so but it is an option, but I recommend you do that only after you've taken care of whatever needs you have in that moment. Yeah, so we're going to, Josette you quickly want to mention about tech issues?

Josette: Yeah, so in case anyone's having tech issues, I ask that folks email me. I'm now emailing the folks, a little bit, a few folks, so you're welcome to email me if for example in the middle of the call you realize your mic isn't working or something along those lines. You're welcome to email me, and I'm going to put my email in the chat box now. That way I can try to help. It was a little bit hard to do that via chat with the private messages seeing as so many messages come up, so email is the best. Thank you.

Sandra: I was looking at the chat too and it says and I am just noting what you said that you wanted, you just want them to stop of interest 42?

Josette: Right.

Sandra: You can only invite somebody to stop. You can't make him stop. You have no power to make him stop. Just like he has no power to make you stop either though. All he was trying was to be controlling, which is what he was trying to do. You can want that all you want, it makes total sense that you want that and my guess is that you can't try to do that without becoming controlling. All righty then, great question, thank you so much for that. Once again, as always this is very application based.

I want you to choose a situation, preferably a recent one. One that is not so emotionally charged. Just in maybe a little 3 or 4 or 5 right, but not like a 9 or 10. I just have 2 hours total with you today. Let's not go for the biggest, most emotionally charged thing that's ever happened to you. Go for a 4 maybe, go for a 5. We are going to be talking about the practice of gentle mindfulness and compassionate, self-accountability. If you've heard about mindfulness before, it'd be great if you could just go in the chat room and type what would you have heard about it would.

What your thoughts are and maybe what it's about. If you practice mindfulness, that'd be great. Just so I know where people are coming from. When situations arise, what we normally engage in is toxic swirling, which is not gentle mindfulness. Toxic swirling and when we had talked earlier about the first 2 practices. We talked about, when situations arise, what do we focus on? We focus on the make believe a lot of times, right? In this situation, let me think of a new one.

Let's talk about the same situation with the nice young ... A nice older gentleman with a gun, walking down my road. Leading as example, the toxic swirling that I could have easily engaged in, is being like, oh my God, he has ... What is he going to do? Does he want to hurt us? Is this going to be another rule, like white person kills off a person of color in the countryside? Is it those horror movies? It could have been, I was like, or it could have been like, oh, how dare he? I can't believe he's doing that. Or it could be, I can't do anything about it.

What am I going to do? It's like, just like a lot of swirling, a lot of like, oh my goodness. All that's happening actually is like, I'm walking on a road and he's walking on a road. Everything else is just, this is toxic swirling. It shows up as like, I don't want this to be happening, this shouldn't be happening, I want it to stop. It could show up as like, it's not really happening, I'm going to ignore it. We're just not going to notice it, and pretend it's not going on. How dare he? It could be judgmental toward him, it could be judgmental toward me. It's all stuff that we're speculating about.

It's all stuff that we're just making up. Which is not to say that none of this is actually happening is true, but they're all ... Where they're living right now is in this toxic swirl up here, in our brains. What happens is that it takes us away from being in the present moment. It takes us away from actually noticing what is happening, so if I'm so caught up in what might be happening. If I'm caught up with what might be happening, what I'm assuming is happening, what I'm afraid might happen, am I able to actually pay attention to what is actually happening.

Now it gets pretty difficult. It actually, all that toxic swirling actually interferes with our ability to notice what is going on. Mindfulness is the opposite of that. Mindfulness is looking at the situation and being present to it. Being connected to it, notice what is happening both external reality as well as our internal reality. The key thing to note about this, I added the word gentle to this. Gentle mindfulness is redundant because mindfulness by its nature is supposed to be gentle, right.

It's supposed to be nonjudgmental, it's supposed to be noncritical, it's just supposed to be acknowledging, but I want to emphasize it because sometimes we don't know how to bring gentleness to things we're paying attention to. We often pay attention to things that are going wrong, from a place of fear and anger and frustration and stress. It's really looking at the present situation, with just this gentle acknowledgement.

Like, oh, that's what's going on. That's what's going on and the type of acknowledgment that we talked about from practice number 2, of acknowledging external realities. What we're doing is accepting it as it is. We're saying that this is what's going on. We're not saying there's a right or wrong to it, we're just saying, this is what's happening. I'm walking down the road with my family, there is this other guy who's also walking on the road and he has a gun.

He's looking at me and there's an energy coming off of him that is not friendly. That feels kind of hostile, might be. It's actually paying attention to all the cues coming up in my own body and then also noting what is happening in external reality, as opposed to being in the make believe, where I'm speculating of what he's probably doing, why he's doing it and I'm betraying that as true. You can have speculations, but treat them as speculations, not as the truth.

I'm going to just stop there for a second so that folks can ask questions, because this is a snapshot of what we normally do versus what gentle mindfulness is. Does that make sense for folks? Do you have any questions about what that distinction is? Or they feel like, oh no, it still feels really like confusing and together. You don't know what one is versus the other one or can they see themselves in this as well.

I'm getting no response so I'm assuming that's agreement. That people got it. All right, good. I like the thumbs up. That's very helpful. I like responsiveness.

Josette: There was one comment that said, I think it's simple in theory, but hard in practice. That one came in as you were speaking.

Sandra: Very, very true. It's always like that, especially in the beginning. We always suck at everything the first time we try it. That's okay. That is okay. We're going to go into practice and let me just go back to my sharing the screen. How do we shift from the toxics world to the gentle mindfulness? In theory, what happens is that our mind is swirling and we're often caught in the very grips of it. It's like a dog with a bone and we're the bone. It's very hard to just knock yourself out of it and free yourself so you can actually choose.

That's what happens in very emotionally charged situations. Thinking about a situation that you thought about a couple slides ago. How you get caught up in toxics swirl and you get so emotionally charged that it has so much meaning, so much significance and it raises so much pain and fear. The way to get free, loosen that grip up a bit, enough so

that you have some spaciousness. You have some spaciousness so you're not just being tossed around by a toxic swirl, is going to be the first 2 practices.

The practice of humility and curiosity, which means that that toxic swirl that you're in, perhaps is not the whole truth. Perhaps is not even a part of the truth, who knows. The curiosity means that, okay, now I'm going to try to find out what's going on with myself first and foremost and then with the other person possibly, if I wanted to go that route. Once you get to the point of, okay, so maybe this toxic swirl isn't everything in the whole entire truth.

How do we say distinguishing reality and be like, okay, there is a bunch of realities happening at the same time. There is my reality, there is the other person's reality and then external reality. With external reality, you can be like, okay, there's a person just walking down the road and I'm walking down the road with my family and that other person has a gun and he's given me a look that I'm not quite sure what that look means. Okay, mindfulness was just happening in that point actually.

When you know external reality and then you focus in on it and you notice it for what it was and you didn't add anything else to it. Now I want to talk ... That's really important to get the spaciousness, so that you can then go into talking. I'm going to go back to it so you can see me, because I'm making a lot of hand gestures that I feel are useful. Can people also put in the chat whether or not they prefer to see my face as I talk or prefer to see the PowerPoint when it has some text on it? I'm not sure which is more helpful.

Mindfulness is an incredibly powerful practice, because what it does, it helps create the spaciousness so that you can actually get in touch with your emotions and needs. I want to talk a little bit about what's mindfulness, how it's being used in our society a lot of times. I think there's some conflict. There are some problematical things that are happening with it. People, they often go from ... They try to get in touch with their feelings and emotions from the toxic swirl.

As you can imagine, trying to go from toxic swirl to getting in touch their feelings, is going to be chaotic. It's going to be like, whoa. You're going to be tossed around, which is why most people don't want to get in touch with their feelings. Because they're going from toxic swirl to feelings. That makes sense, you want to avoid that and so what you got to do is you got to get grounded at first. This is why mindfulness has become so popular in the United States and it's a Buddhist as practice originally and it's become separated from Buddhism for many reasons.

One of them I think related to racism, white supremacy that we're very uncomfortable with things that are religious from non-Christianity. That's unfortunate in many ways and problematic in many ways, because you have mindfulness being used as a more stress reduction and anxiety relief tool, which it is and it's great to be used in that way, but it's also not all that it can do. It's just like a portion of what can happen with it.

What mindfulness, what it does with physical mindfulness is what people are being taught and especially in yoga, which I think is part of the reason why yoga has become so popular, because it's one of the few places people are actually getting in touch with their bodies and we're a very disconnected society. When you go ... I think it's a very powerful practice and it's limited in how it's being used right now.

When you go from a toxic swirl, the way to calm down a toxic swirl is getting mindful and becoming present your body. It creates a space of physical spaciousness. It creates a physical spaciousness. Where then you can take a breath and you can breathe into what is actually going on emotionally. Like why do you have that physical reaction in the first place and so you can then dig deeper and get in touch with the underlying cause.

Unfortunately, what is happening in our society in the way mindfulness is being used? Not in all situations, but in many situations, is it's being used purely as an anxiety relief, as a stress reducer, as a pacifier. I've seen even articles, how businesses are using mindfulness and having their employees do it, because it reduces your stress levels, but what is that in service of. It's in service of them being able to continue to work that as hard as they are, so they are really stressed, but they're just working that hard with unrealistic expectations of them, which is a little bit less stress.

It's not actually dealing with the underlying causes of their physical reactions. It's just pacifying them. You always got to ask, what is this thing being used in service of. What we're going to keep talking about is not just pacification, but to get grounded in our physical bodies so that we can then dig a little deeper and get in touch with the emotional aspect, with the needs, our physical ... Our needs and our feeling that are driving the emotion, that are driving that emotional ... They're driving that physical reaction so that we can actually take care of the source, the cause of that.

I'm going to take ... I'm going to pause for a second here and take questions. Hey Mary questions? Josette?

Josette: I'm looking. I didn't see any. Mostly people sharing their experiences. There was a question about appropriation of this mindfulness it's, like you using it western ... As a western person who hasn't gone up with the sort of thing. Is that appropriation in of the self and to what degree if so and that sort of thing, but about the practice itself, I haven't seen any questions.

Sandra: Okay. The appropriation of mindfulness, which is definitely true and happening, especially as Zen Buddhism and then it's appropriation of Zen Buddhism, everything is Zen now. I just got here and it's Zen coloring book. There's a lot happening. I don't think ... I think it can ... I don't think it's impossible obviously as a person who doesn't grow up in a country where Buddhism is practiced predominantly for that ... That doesn't necessarily mean that's going to be appropriate in the way you use it.

At the same time, you have to be ... You have to be looking at ... You have to be looking at how it's being used and how are you choosing to use it and what are you learning

about it and just being really honest about that. I think you can use it as ... You can use it as a stress reliever and be like, I know that comes ... Has these roots in Buddhism and that has actually part of spiritual practice, initial, originally and that's how it's used by thousands, millions of people and I'm choosing not to.

You can do that. What I think is really problematic is we use ... When you don't acknowledge where it comes from, you don't acknowledge its role in spiritual practices and you think that the way that you're doing it is the only way ... Is really the true and only way of doing it. You don't understand everything ... Everything always gets mopped. Everything always gets adopted.

Buddhism has spread throughout many, many countries and it's different in every country. In each country, there are many different branches and then they just be honest about you're doing. Right. There a lot of folks who do Yoga and are very huge advocates of yoga without actually knowing where yoga comes from and how is part of the larger ethical system and religious framework and approach.

Understanding what is significance of own and light. Would you do a Hail Mary after an exercise of aerobics? They're like just getting in touch with the reality of the history and how it is used and just be honest about what you're doing. I think if you want to use it, just be honest about it. If you're trying to commercialize and make money off of that, that's a whole different story but ... Any other questions?

Speaker 2: I've wanted to question share if that's okay.

Sandra: Yeah.

Speaker 2: I'm actually now in touch with sharing. I have a question, but I just wanted to say ... Because I said this really ... I'm sorry and I'm walking home, so I apologies for being outside, but I was saying how this is a really timely and helpful for me right now. I'm amazed because I've been trying to ... I'm working on practicing mindfulness for a few years, but I'm kind of maintaining that, but I'm working on it. I also ... I have anxiety and depression that I'm constantly you manage that as a constant in your life if you have it.

I'm in a bad moment and just hearing this exchange and the way you've started up with the toxic swirl was just almost really empowering to just hear it, because that's exactly what I'm going through and what's happening. It's like you start getting lost in all the bad that's happening and all the bad ... I'm dealing with like a lot of financial stress and so, I'm constantly facing like, "Oh my God, like am I living the life I wanted. Am I ever going to make any money?"

I just go down this toxic swirl of crap that in the end is it all productive and so it's really been really helpful to hear you talk about to make ... This whole idea of this compassionate activism and how personal it is and how to make the practice of mindfulness ac-

tually serves me and my current leads and not just this like lofty the idea that I have of being mentally and mindful healthy things will be food for my life, but also like no.

This is actually going to give me power in myself to manage when I'm getting lost in this toxic swirl that I'm living in right now. I guess more than question, it's really like a thank you because this is just like so ... I'm the boss that I'm hearing you and I'm like, "Oh." Like mind blow. I hear like a commercial with my mind like wow. Thank you. I can just ... This is really helpful and I feel really empowered to be able to manage my own health and my own mental health. I just really appreciate it, so thank you.

Sandra: Thank you. Thanks for sharing. Here's the thing. That mindfulness ... What mindfulness really does, is it gets us in touch with their own humanity. Own emotional realities, which are unique and so what systemic oppression has done is basically say there's only one truth out there and so, truth are the most privileged. Their truths are true. I would say even for the most privileged, they don't fit into that dominant narratives. They're still actually also being harmed because it's a boxing in of them as well.

What we deal with on every single day, whenever we feel like we don't have the ability to express ourselves. We don't feel like we have the freedom to choose, we feel trapped, that really speaks to us being dominated. Speaks to us being policed. Speaks to us being treated like we're less than, we're not important and where do we learn those lessons? We learned that from systemic oppression. Starting on as children.

Frankly our families, our parents dominated us or our caregivers dominated us and we're told that our emotional reality wasn't real. We're forced and coerced and punished into various things. As it was we got older, we still carry all that emotional charge and we've constantly struggling against this dominant narrative of who we're supposed to be and our ... The fact that we're not that person.

That we feel like we're not important. We're not lovable. We're not competent. We're not enough so somebody inherently wrong with us and so what mindfulness actually gets us in touch with again is ourselves, so the toxic swirl is that dissonance between a dominant narrative and who we are in reality and we're fighting. We're just constantly fighting that. The domineered of who other people are and how and that makes them turn ... Puts them into uniforms so we can't relate to their humanity.

Systemic oppression cuts us off from ourselves and from other people so we can't connect to your own humanity and other people's humanities because we can't ... Our realities are erased by systemic oppression. Mindfulness actually gets us back in touch with that. With that reality, our internal realities, so it wasn't designed to fight social justice, but I think it can. I think it's the only thing that does. That brings forth our own humanity, our own stories.

I'm just going to ... I just went off there for a second, but ... I'm going to walk you through a process of how to actually do mindfulness. How to get actually in touch with your feelings and so, this is an invitation. People do not have to do if they choose not to

you should always say yes in our counter offer. Counter offer being that you may be like, "I'm going to do it only as far as a feel like and I'm going to stop at any point or I'm just going to listen and think about doing it, but not actually do it."

These are always options. You can say yes, no, counter offer. What I'm going to do, just let you know is I'm going to walk you through a visualization and asking you to do a body scan and then get in touch with a feeling that was raised through thinking about this emotional charge situation. I want you to get comfortable and close your eyes. Stay comfortable, close your eyes. I want you to take a couple of deep breathes and just feel your body breathing in and out. In and out. Just take a couple of deep breathes. In and out. In and out.

I want you to bring gentle attention to your feet. Just notice how your feet feel if they're tired or feel relaxed. Move up to your curves. Just pay attention. Don't try and change anything, just notice. Bring gentle attention to your legs, your upper legs. Notice that anything is tensed or relaxed or tight then move up to your torso. Notice that there's any tightness anywhere, any openness. Don't try to change anything.

Move to your shoulders and your arms. Just notice. Just notice what's going on there. Move to your neck and then your head, just notice. Don't try to change any feelings. I want you to think about that emotionally charged situation and go to where you feel that feeling that charge. Where is it hot in your body and just do a very quick body scan so you can find it? Keep your eyes closed and once you notice where it is your body, I want you to just see what's going on.

How big is it? Is it small like a nickel is it like a pumpkin? Does it move? Maybe it, maybe it doesn't. Does it have a color or a shape? It may, it may not. Does it have a smell or a sound? Just notice. What does it look like? What does it feel like to you? You may not see something as much, you just kind of feel something. Just bring gentle attention to it and don't try to change it. There's no right or wrong to this.

I want you to go inside of it. Just sit inside of it. From the inside, I want you to look around. Turn around. Look up and down. Notice what's coming up for you as you're inside of it. As you're looking around, just kind of send to it a gentle accepting beam of light. You're not trying to change it. You're not trying to make it go away. You're not trying to judge it. You're just looking at it. Just look around and give it kind of that gentle attention. Just notices what's coming up for you.

Now, I want you to ask does it have a message for you and it may or may not say anything and that's okay. You ask it, is there something it wants you to do for it. It's okay if there's no answer. Just sit there, give it your gentle attention. Take one last look around and thank it for its time. Now, I want you to take a couple of deep breathes again. Start wiggling your feet and your hands and move a little bit in your chair and open up your eyes and come back. All right, so looks like folks are having experience.

I'm with you. You may not have been and that's perfectly all right. Some folks, nothing happens for you. There's no right or wrong to it. That happens, there's a first time. We often suck at the first time we do anything. For some of you, maybe you got a real deep. Maybe you got in touch with something that actually was real. There was some source of pain that you got in touch with. That happens too.

I'm going to have people break ... Go in the breakout room. Does anybody have those ready? Go into the breakout rooms and I want you to talk about, what was it like? Let me share the screen. I want to share ... I want you to be sharing the breakout groups. What is a typical toxics swirl for you in that situation? Then talk about what happened when we did this exercise? When you brought mindfulness to that emotional charge, that reaction you have and a contrast.

Do a compare and contrast of the 2 or what normally happens with and the toxic whirl and then what happened with you that was different or maybe something was similar when you do the mindfulness. Like I said, if nothing came up for you, that's perfectly okay. There's no right or wrong to this. It's just sometimes it's harder in the beginning. I'm going to do the breakout rooms. All right, so we sound check in 5, so we are back and all we want to do ... Josette, you wanted to mention site again too?

Josette: Yes, so in case everyone isn't aware, we have on everyday feminism website, we have a course log-on page and this log-on page comes with the videos, transcripts. The chat logs and the PowerPoint, so after this session, at various times in session as we're in session, present videos take longer, but PowerPoint is pretty easy to put up. There all the materials related to this are on there and you can sign up for sessions with Sandra as well.

Everything that you need is there and I'm posting the URL to log in with whatever you registered with the course with. If you have any problems, feel free to email me at Josette@everydayfeminism.com

Sandra: Great. All right, so I wanted to first check your folks and have people share. We're going to a whiteboard for folks who've never don't whiteboard before. Whiteboard, you can select. It's full to touch, to write, to draw, to color and I want people to write down what that was like to go through that process. The visualization process.

If you also want to just type it the group chat, that works as well. As people are doing that, if you had a question you could just stop. You could just ask question about what that was or if you wanted to share what that was like for you verbally, that'd be great too. Here's I've got painful, neutral, reflective, uncomfortable, surreal. Anybody want to share what that experience was like for them? Or maybe there is something that surprised them as they were doing it? All right. There you go who want to share?

Speaker 3: Can you hear me?

Sandra: Yes.

Speaker 3: Okay, so quickly. My situation was at a conference listening to an older white gentleman talk about de-colonial critiques and the underlying presumption of his paper was that educated people in the western tradition, whether or not they're people of color aren't allowed to have a voice in these conversations. He kept on using words like impoverished groups and subaltern group, which is problematic for other reasons and kind of reducing and classifying and deciding who gets to speak and who gets to really have a voice in terms of de-colonial theory and philosophy, so that triggered me for obviously reasons and I immediately resisted it.

Even questioned in my mind, you know the kind of intellectual bases of knowledge. Really got caught up in his make believe world of, he's obviously doesn't have. I don't know maybe more of a social justice paradigm at play, but I really shut it down so when I did the mindfulness exercise, the visualization and body scan, it was really amazing because I can really see a monument of supremacy emerging and I enter in and I saw his books and his collections and all of the things that he was basing his stuff on.

Even maybe I saw framed images of great white philosophers and deconstructionist and culture objects. I really thought about all of that the heart of what he was trying to do. Just like me, he's trying to ... He really wants these people to have voices. He really wants them to be heard. He was layering on an interesting concept about who gets to speak and putting on a value system there, but underneath that, if I keep on peeling it away, we share the same goal, which was to make sure all the groups are heard.

You just label and that, so anyway, it's that activity was hugely, hugely powerful for me and it really helped me isolate myself and maybe put myself in his shoes. Thank you.

Sandra: Yeah. Great. That was interesting. That actually helped you get more into his possible reality and also connecting you with your own. That happens sometimes. That's great. Usually, it just ... Usually helps people just get more into their emotional reality, but this is ... that helped you. It sounds like access from your emotionality reality to this potential emotional reality. Cool.

Speaker 3: I think I could continue to be resistant, but I was really trying to separate our realities and trying to find and the root of what his reality was and I kind of ... I don't know. Can have compassion at that moment. At the root of what he actually was maybe attempting to do.

Sandra: It's possible that's what he was ... It's probably... It's possible that's what he's attempting, the problems, that's what he was attempting to do and we often times ... The way systemic oppression operates is that, we've been taught how to be disconnected and harmful to each other, so even when we try to rectify the situation, we unintentionally often are actually stop perpetuating and so it's about being in conversation as it's happening and listening.

It's possible that that's what was going on for him. You could ... Later on, we could talk about how you can engage in conversation to help dig deeper into that with him, but it also sounds, but it felt like you got more in touch with where you were coming from and that's really great because you have to re-ground there versus the toxic whirl.

Speaker 3: Right. Thank you.

Sandra: What's the level of the emotional charge? Where do you go from ... Like you could label it before and after, like 10 being the highest and 1 being mild?

Speaker 3: The first time I did the activity, I really learned. You said not to pick something emotionally charged and I went for the most emotionally ... I was already crying. I immediately learned from that lesson. Throughout the week, I've been really trying to scale of my experiences in terms of maybe one to 10 and I'm really picking things that are middle to below so that I can actually do the steps that you are teaching us.

When I thought about it, it triggered me, but it felt like it was coming from my gut and my heart, but my heart wasn't racing. I was just pissed and creating an imaginary world of he doesn't know what he is talking about kind of thing.

Sandra: After it was done, what level was it at?

Speaker 3: It was pretty compassionate actually which was so surreal about it and I still maybe had some pet back for myself, but it was really compassionate and so now maybe I have to take that visualization exercise to the next step of could probably couldn't do that in person and so coming to that compassionate moment and then what you are going to teach us next, how to actually have a meaningful dialogue around it.

Sandra: Awesome. The charge was very elastic which created this space for you to feel compassion so he's curious about where he is coming from.

Speaker 3: Precisely yeah.

Sandra: There you go.

Speaker 3: Thank you.

Sandra: Want to share also people say that on a white board for folks who are not reading I say when I went to difficult place internally, I felt trapped for a while, but when Sandra had us explore it and be curious, it shifted. I no longer felt trapped and was able to look more. Other folks said that they could only go so far. They could visualize this world, but not go inside or talk to it. There is a whole range of experiences. I currently am building an emotional political revolution. Yes. Yes I am. Secretly. There's lots of secret.

Anybody else want to share. Have any questions about that exercise? For somebody who tried to do it, but they got stuck somewhere, anybody want to share about that? Those are really helpful.

Freya: Yeah. I'll talk about my experience. Can everyone hear me?

Sandra: Yeah. We can hear you.

Freya: The experience I was thinking of was, as we're learning about family law stuff. I'm a law student and one of the topics that came up was in-vitro fertilization and we're talking about and a lot of people ... I'm a career woman and a lot of people were laughing because they thought it sounded so silly the way that lesbians have to have babies. That happened today and it made me really uncomfortable and made me pretty pissed, but it still wasn't like a nine or a ten it was about 4 or 5.

When we were going through the activity and I felt the feeling in my shoulder, the tightness and then red hot right in my stomach like I wanted to punch someone. When I felt it, it only made it feel worse when I was concentrating on it. It just made me feel more uncomfortable and more like I was in that situation again and I just want to get out of it. I don't know. That was my experience.

Sandra: Right. It sounded like you're still resisting its existence. As you are resisting its existence, that's a lot of temple. When you're resisting the existence of that feeling, it felt like it was getting bigger. Is that correct?

Freya: Yeah. I felt like I was feeling it more yeah.

Sandra: Do you mind? You can say yes, no, counter-offer always. Do you mind if we do this again together?

Freya: Yes.

Sandra: Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. Once again you only go as far as you want to go, right? I'll just ask. Sometimes when I ask do you want to go somewhere into this? You'll be saying no and then I'll be like okay. Do you choose to go into it and they'll say yes. Sometimes. Sometimes they'll still say no and that totally happens as well. Close your eyes. I want you to take a couple of deep breaths again.

Just get settled back into your body and then think of the situation and go to where it is in your body. Where it's hot or how do you experience it. Do you have a place? Where is it?

Freya: My shoulders.

Sandra: Your shoulders. Okay. What does it feel like to you?

Freya: Feels like balls. Just tight. Like dumbbells on my shoulders.

Sandra: Really pulling you down?

Freya: Mm-hmm.

Sandra: How big are they?

Freya: Like an orange.

Sandra: An orange. What color are they?

Freya: Orange.

Sandra: They're oranges dumbbells weighing you down. If you could do from one to ten, ten being the most severe and one being almost nothing, how emotionally ... How charged is it? How heavy is it for you.

Freya: Like a 5.

Sandra: A 5. Okay. What are you noticing coming up for you as you have these dumb bells, these orange dumbbells weighing you down?

Freya: It just feels impossible to get off.

Sandra: Hmm hm, tell me more.

Freya: I'm in my body like I'm trying to do the toes calf's legs to feel everything and then concentrating on this, but I still just see an entire classroom of people are just laughing at what felt like me.

Sandra: You mean with the other participants in this program right now?

Freya: Oh, no. no. Like, the trigger example.

Sandra: Great. That's right. I'm sorry. Close your eyes again. All right. Yeah. Yeah you can feel that. Where are you feeling that reaction to them laughing at you?

Freya: Right in my chest.

Sandra: Tell me a little more about what's going on in your chest?

Freya: It feels tight. My whole torso feels tight. I have like where my shoulder is, my chest is tight, my lower back is tight. I'm tightening up. I feel like I want to become aggressive.

Sandra: How to shape, what would that shape be?

Freya: Just a rad, like messy entanglement.

Sandra: It feels like you're really tied up, almost like encaged?

Freya: Yeah.

Sandra: Is it moving?

Freya: Not really. No. Just like shaking.

Sandra: Like shaking. Shaking you inside of it?

Freya: Yeah.

Sandra: What else do you know is coming up for you?

Freya: A little bit of sadness too.

Sandra: Where do you feel that sadness?

Freya: Almost underneath the entanglement and stuff.

Sandra: Okay. I want you to go to that. Tell me a little bit more. What does that look like for you?

Freya: It feels really silly to say it. It feels like a slate. Like a dark gray or bluish gray slate.

Sandra: A slate. How big is it?

Freya: Armor sized.

Sandra: Armor sized?

Freya: Yes because it feels like armor.

Sandra: How is the relationship to the red tight ball and the orange dumbbells?

Freya: It's underneath all that.

Sandra: Is there anything written on the slate?

Freya: No.

Sandra: Okay. What else do you notice about the slate?

Freya: It's really tight.

Sandra: Tight in suffocating way or it just like physical ball tight way or what kind of tightness?

Freya: Feels like the kind of tightness when you go like this with your hands. You're squeezing all too hard.

Sandra: Do you want to go inside of it?

Freya: No. I don't think so.

Sandra: Okay. Where is it coming up that you don't want to go inside of it?

Freya: What do you mean?

Sandra: What feeling is happening that's making you feel like you don't want to go inside of it?

Freya: The feeling beneath anger, the sadness.

Sandra: The slate?

Freya: Yeah.

Sandra: Okay, can you walk up to the slate?

Freya: Yeah.

Sandra: Okay, so I want you to walk up to the slate and get a little close to it, so it's in front of. What do you know that's seen coming up for you?

Freya: A feeling, feels insurmountable and large.

Sandra: Can you walk around it?

Freya: No.

Sandra: Because it's too big?

Freya: Yeah, in every direction.

Sandra: Can you envision a container that you create that could hold it?

Freya: I could.

Sandra: You want to try that?

Freya: Yeah.

Sandra: This container is not doing anything, but just holding it with attention, gentle attention. What's coming up for you now?

Freya: I don't know, kind of like blocked, like I don't. I feel like outside things, conscious of how much time I'm taking up one on one.

Sandra: That's fine. That's totally fine. You want to ask it something? Can you touch it? Can you touch it actually?

Freya: I don't think I'd want to.

Sandra: Do you chose to?

Freya: No, no, not right now. I don't think so.

Sandra: What's coming? What's the feeling that's coming up that wants you to not do that?

Freya: It's the anger again.

Sandra: Let's go back to the anger then, where is the anger?

Freya: Right here and shoulders.

Sandra: Is it the same as the orange part or the red tightness or is it something different?

Freya: I think it's something different.

Sandra: Tell me more about them.

Freya: I think, I think that broader is humiliation, anger, sadness.

Sandra: How is that showing up in your body right now?

Freya: A lot of tightness everywhere.

Sandra: Can you just breathe into that tightness and don't try to change it or resist it or make it go away, just breathe. Keep breathing into that tightness, just being with it.

Go to each level and each level just breathe with it. Don't resist its existence, just breathe with it. Let me know when you breathe with all of it.

Freya: I think I've breathed with all of it.

Sandra: What do you notice now?

Freya: I don't know.

Sandra: From a scale of 1 to 10 where are you at with it?

Freya: I don't know. I think I'm going to stop.

Sandra: Okay. That's totally fine. Thank you for sharing. Thanks for letting us put this up.

Freya: Thank you.

Sandra: I just want to share, I want to talk about it a little bit is that all right? My commentary. My commentary in this, so actually now, what was that like for you?

Freya: Really uncomfortable. Aside from the whole people watching you thing. I just, it is like diving into feelings that are, that it took a while to get there. It took a while to build them up, but it is also taking a while to feel them.

Sandra: Right and how much access do you normally have? How much? How in touch are you normally with these feelings?

Freya: Oh, not at all.

Sandra: Not at all, so if there was a 100% that you could be in touch with it, how much are you normally in touch with it?

Freya: 5% to 7%.

Sandra: Yeah and then in this conversation, how much were you able to the first time, the first visualization exercise.

Freya: The first time, probably like the 7%.

Freya: Like 11%

Sandra: Then this time with me?

Freya: Like 15%

Sandra: Yeah, so that's progress.

Freya: Yeah.

Sandra: All right, did you get that?

Freya: Yeah.

Sandra: You went from normally 5, 5% on your own and then through that group exercise 7%, then with me, even though you have this whole group of people watching you, you actually got to 15%.

Freya: Yeah.

Sandra: Right and that took what? That was 2 times, each time being like 5 minutes each. 5 or 10 minutes each maybe.

Freya: Okay that felt like an hour.

Sandra: The second time might have been like 10 minutes possibly, possibly. That was it, so this total 15 minutes, you tripled how much access you had to being able to be with them. Right? That's huge actually. You have a life time of not having access to it. You have a lifetime of resisting, ignoring and minimizing and running away from it right?

Freya: Right.

Sandra: In 15 minutes you just went from 5% to 15%.

Freya: Yeah.

Sandra: If you kept doing that, how long would take maybe for you to get 100%?

Freya: Maybe not that long.

Sandra: I am now going to take you off the hot spot. Thank you, thank you Freya. I've been lately asking for somebody to share who had struggled with it because this is hard. This is, some people feel is, some people find that painful, surreal, eye opening, mutual, uncomfortable, so all these stuff right? It's everything and anything. That's totally okay.

We have been taught to be divorced from our feelings. We've been taught that our experiences aren't real. Right, where do you learn that? Systemic oppression. You'll notice that everything is some of the answers to systemic oppression and healing with me. Overall problems, systemic oppression. How do we deal, how do we address it? Healing.

Systemic oppression taught us that our experiences are not valid, our feelings aren't important. Our needs are not important, because we are not important. We don't matter. We don't matter, so we've heard that our whole lives and so then we act like we're surprised and that we can't get access to our needs. We don't know what our needs even are. We don't know what feelings are, so can you touch thing, not all touch thing, cut like at times she said, "I don't know." She said, "I don't know. I don't know what's going on." That's pretty common.

I didn't learn how to emotionally process until I was in my 20s. I didn't know it was a real, it was a thing. There's a thing called emotional processing, who knew? I didn't, that was never taught to me. They don't talk to me about that. I happen to meet somebody who did, gave me some books. I've been on this journey very since trying to make this accessible so people aren't like me, not knowing that you came do this thing called emotional processing, but there is a reason why we don't know how to do it.

We actually as children we know how to do it. Animals know how to do it. You have a feeling, they act on it, they shake off. We've been, so as we've been taught to be disconnected so when we try to get reconnecting with our feelings, we suck at it in the beginning. I'm surprised that some people are even and people for the most part it was getting a little bit further in these conversations, because you actually have a lifetime of doing the opposite of this and yet in 5, 10 minutes people got deeper.

People got a little bit more access, people got a little bit more able to get in touch with what's going on with them. Like I said before, we only have our own internal reality. There is no other reality for us, so we have that, so if we don't have access, if we're not in touch with our own internal reality ... are we still on white board? Oh, so we've been talking this entire time not being on video.

Anyways, we don't have access to this external reality, we only have access to our internal reality, right. If we don't ... If we aren't in touch with our underlying feelings and needs, then what do we have. We have the toxic swirl. Assuming we live there most of the time, but if you live in make believe, how much capacity do you have to be able to actually deal with reality. You can't. You can't focus all your time in make believe and actually deal with reality.

This is why at the end of the day, this mindfulness practice that I'm teaching you, what is it in service of? It's in service of you being able to deal with your own internal reality and do what you need to do, so you can be who you want to be in the world. I'm going to pause here because we've got 5 minutes left and I want folks to do another breakout room and just be like, talk about, if there is one takeaway that you can have from today's conversation, what would it be? Just one takeaway.

Let me do a breakout room. Okay. I think we're all back. Anybody want to share in chat box or verbally, what your main takeaway is from this day's session?

Ara: Could I say something?

Sandra: Yeah, go for it.

Ara: What really struck me was and I shared this in the breakout room, was that, when you were going over the activity one on one with Freya and you were saying how 15% percent doesn't seem like a lot, but when you compare to going from 5% to 15% in the course of a couple minutes with a bunch of people walking you or watching you.

That kind of progress is huge and I think it's important to remember that, in our society with all the oppression that you get, for me it's because I'm disabled and if I can't word-ing all these things without having a mental breakdown. There are still little things I do that are really progress, it's just not according to the standards that society sets for everybody. It's important to remember that progress is progress, even if it's like a baby step.

Sandra: Right. Because we've deliberately been taught the opposite of this. We've been deliberately taught to ignore our feelings and treat them like they are not important. Yeah, progress. Going from 5% to 15%, with a whole bunch of people watching is really wonderful actually. Thank you Ara. I'm looking at also what other folks have been sharing. I think in the chat box and from the main conversation, the main room, is just remembering.

It's hard to remember to do this when you're in the moment, but if you learn, if you learn to identify when you feel your blood get up, when you feel that emotional charge, that's exactly the moment that you can take that breath for yourself. Take that time. If people who learn about anger management are just generally dealing with upset feelings, you take a moment for yourself. Whether it's walking around the neighborhood. I like to give ... I like to say, you can go to the bathroom at any point.

Nobody will say no to you going to the bathroom, even in the middle of a meeting. Just take that moment and prioritize your feelings, your well-being and just breathe a little bit, create a little more spaciousness so you can check on. You can see it doesn't need to take. You don't need to take 2 weeks off of vacation to do this. We did this in 5 minutes and it gets faster and faster and faster and faster.

When my coach does this exercise with me, normally, I have to do it for 10 minutes with somebody, with me, like a minute into their visualization exercise, I've already gone to the heart of the situation. I really know exactly what I need to do. I guess I spent the first 2 decades of my life being completely disconnected from my feelings, to the point where my mom was in the hospital, I had no emotional reaction to it at 13 years old. Now it's like, oh right, got it. I know what I need to do. I move.

That's why I'm so effective in the world, but it doesn't mean that I'm perfect, so there's still things that are a struggle for me too. It's the practice, you just got to keep on practicing and you get better over time. Anybody else want to enjoy ... Anybody else want to share their takeaway? Wherever there's a sonic oppression we need deal with it through

healing. I agree with that. Anybody else? Nobody wants to verbally share? Slowing down and being compassionate for myself, being that loving parent.

Awesome. All right, I just want to thanks folks. Thank folks for coming out and just taking the time to prioritize this for yourselves and really engaging. This is not easy stuff, there's a reason why we run away from it, but as you learn that if the toxic swirl is not the only reality we have. We can actually create a different one by getting in touch with what's going on inside of us.

Thank you and the next session is going to be on Tuesday. We're actually going to switch over to a Tuesday schedule. Let me share that and it'll be April 26th, at 6:00 pm eastern, 3:00 pm pacific. I'll send another reminder out and we'll be sharing the notes and the recordings for this in a couple of days. Probably Friday at the latest. Okay. Thank you everybody.

Speaker 4: Bye.