

Mindful Work

But...(the Five Hindrances)

There are many reasons why we feel we can't do the mindfulness practice. It's common to hear people say "I'd love to do it but I can't sit still", or "I know it would help me relax but I don't have the time". These 'buts' are very common.

We may feel discomfort, reluctance or seek distraction from unpleasant feelings, but if we can be just a little disciplined, and patient with the discomfort, there can be great insights to be found from difficult states of mind, or simply from drilling down into what we're really feeling when we don't feel like practicing.

Some of the 'buts' below reflect a well-known sequence of 'hindrances' to meditation. You may experience these stages again and again. So learn to recognise them and accept that it's just something that happens, without giving up early. Knowing this in advance will give you the confidence to carry on.

The hindrances follow a sequence as follows:

- **boredom** – you're waiting for something to happen, or feel that something is missing or needed. When nothing appears, you feel...
- **anger** – as you experience this boredom, you may get a bit angry or annoyed. As this escalates and your energy gets taken up, you get to feel...
- **dullness** – you get sleepy, foggy-headed, dreamy, distracted, or can't be bothered. As this sets in, it may trigger...
- **restlessness** – you start worrying about all kinds of things, and can't sit still or get calm. You then experience...
- **doubt** – 'this whole thing is nonsense, it's not for me, I've been badly instructed and it's all a waste of time'.

The main antidote to these states, is simply awareness of their presence. If you can see the pattern arising, have a sense of humour at these crotchety old friends re-appearing. The key strategy is to recognise the state, accept it as ok, be curious about it, and know that it is temporary. If it won't shift, get up, have a bath, chase the cat, or do anything to refresh your mind and start again.

The big insight you may get, is that these experiences, that you notice in our mindfulness practice, are probably happening behind the scenes **all day long**. They may be key drivers of your actions and behaviour, so recognising them is really useful.