



JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST STUDIES,  
VOL.15, NO.1 (JANUARY-JUNE, 2024) 116-128



## EXPLORATION OF THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS-BASED COGNITIVE THERAPY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE SATIPAṬṬHĀNA SUTTA

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Research Article

#### Keywords:

MBCT, four foundations of mindfulness, Buddhism, Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta,

**Received:** January 15, 2024

**Revised:** February 20, 2024

**Accepted:** March 01, 2024

**Published online:** May 31, 2024

### ABSTRACT

The present research investigates the theoretical foundations of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), focusing on the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, a foundational text in Buddhist meditation practice. The study aims to examine the foundational framework of MBCT by assessing the congruence between MBCT practices and techniques and Buddhist meditation methods explained in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. Even though MBCT is an evidence-based psychotherapeutic intervention for preventing the relapse of depression, its theoretical foundation and mechanism of efficacy remain insufficiently investigated. Through a cross-cultural perspective, this study evaluates the relationship between MBCT and the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and its implications for the development of MBCT as a therapeutic intervention, focusing on the connections between the theoretical underpinnings of MBCT and the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. The findings support that MBCT is an evidence-based intervention that was integrated with ancient knowledge from Asia on the management of depression.

 ISSN: 2586-9620 (online)  
<https://so09.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/jibs>

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## INTRODUCTION

Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) is an eight-week group-based psychological intervention that integrates principles from both cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR).<sup>1</sup> This intervention is empirically supported as a practical psychotherapeutic approach for the management of relapse of depression.<sup>2</sup> However, despite its growing popularity in medical settings, the theoretical foundations and mechanisms underlying MBCT have not been thoroughly explored.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the present study aims to evaluate the theoretical foundation of MBCT by examining its relationship with the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. This canonical Buddhist text elucidates the four foundations of mindfulness practices. Specifically, the study intends to explore the connections between MBCT and the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and their implications for further development of MBCT as a more effective therapeutic approach.

## CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE OF MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness has become more widely practiced and applied in various contexts within contemporary society than in its traditional Asian roots.<sup>4</sup> These contexts encompass psychotherapy and mental health promotion, education, workplace wellness, and chronic illness and pain management with the objectives of cultivating self-awareness, self-compassion, self-perspective, and self-transformation.<sup>5</sup>

The propound origin of mindfulness meditation is firmly embedded in the Buddhist tradition, which emerged in India more than two thousand years ago.<sup>6</sup> It is considered the pathway to purifying individuals by achieving freedom from sorrow, lamentation, grief (*dukkha*), and discontent (*paridēva*), leading to the attainment of nibbāna through the practice of the four foundations of mindfulness.<sup>7</sup> The eventual goal of the *Satipaṭṭhāna* is the liberation (*nibbāna*) from suffering, which is the supreme goal of the Buddhist teachings.<sup>8</sup> The Theravāda Buddhist tradition places significant emphasis on mindfulness.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Marks, Eleanor, Nima Moghaddam, Danielle De Boos, and Sam Malins, "A systematic review of the barriers and facilitators to adherence to mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for those with chronic conditions," *British Journal of Health Psychology* 28 (2022): 338–64.

<sup>2</sup> Segal, Zindel, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale, *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression - Second Edition*, (New York: Guilford Publications, 2013), 405.

Kuyken, Willem, Fiona C. Warren, Rod S. Taylor, et al., "Efficacy of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy in Prevention of Depressive Relapse," *JAMA Psychiatry* 73 (2016): 565-74.

<sup>3</sup> Brown, Kirk Warren, and Richard M. Ryan, "The Benefits of Being Present: Mindfulness and Its Role in Psychological Well-Being," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 4 (2003): 822–48.

<sup>4</sup> Williams, J. Mark G., and Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Mindfulness: Diverse Perspectives on Its Meaning, Origins and Applications* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Kabat-Zinn, Jon, "Mindfulness-Based Interventions in Context: Past, Present, and Future," *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 10 (2003): 144–56.

<sup>6</sup> Sipe, Walter E B, and Stuart J Eisendrath, "Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy: Theory and Practice." *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 57 (2012): 63–69.

Kabat-Zinn, Jon. *Full Catastrophe Living (Revised Edition)* (USA: Bantam, 2013):496.

<sup>7</sup> Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu, and Bhikkhu Bodhi (Translated by), *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (USA: Wisdom Publications, 2005): 145.

<sup>8</sup> Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2005): 2.

<sup>9</sup> Gilpin, Richard, "The Use of Theravāda Buddhist Practices and Perspectives in Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy," *Contemporary Buddhism* 9 (2008): 227–51.

This practice has been integrated into psychology and widely disseminated throughout Western countries, with an accelerating interest in its implementation in the medical setting.<sup>10</sup> In particular, the mindfulness techniques utilized in modern mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) are derived from ancient Eastern knowledge, especially early Buddhist practices.<sup>11</sup>

In the Western context, mindfulness has been defined in several ways, including as a mental state or trait, a form of meditation practice, a type of cognitive therapy, a psychological process, and a theoretical construct.<sup>12</sup> It is often described as “awareness that arises through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment”.<sup>13</sup> Another definition of mindfulness, proposed by Brown and Ryan, is “a receptive attention to and awareness of present events and experience.”<sup>14</sup> Mindfulness practice is a non-religious approach that enables individuals to recognize and address the common challenges and vulnerabilities inherent in the human experience in mindfulness-based interventions.

Mindfulness practice typically comprises three core components. Firstly, it involves cultivating awareness through both formal and informal mindfulness practices. Formal mindfulness practices often involve structured practices, including sitting and walking meditation and body scan practice; the participants are given guidance as to the nature and content of the practice. Informal mindfulness practices encompass integrating mindfulness practice into daily activities and routines.<sup>15</sup> Secondly, it involves adopting a specific attitude characterized by kindness, curiosity, and a readiness to stay attentive to one’s experiences as they arise. Thirdly, it entails gaining an embodied comprehension of human vulnerability by receiving teachings and directly observing the experiential process while implementing mindfulness meditation practice.<sup>16</sup>

Grossman and colleagues interpreted mindfulness as promoting non-judgmental awareness in the present moment through formal meditation techniques, emphasizing the significance of daily and systematic practice.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, western researchers have identified several features that constitute

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<sup>10</sup> Keng, Shian-Ling, Moria J. Smoski, and Clive J. Robins, “Effects of Mindfulness on Psychological Health: A Review of Empirical Studies,” *Clinical Psychology Review* 31 (2011): 1041–56.

<sup>11</sup> Cullen, Margaret, “Mindfulness-Based Interventions: An Emerging Phenomenon,” *Mindfulness* 2 (2011): 186–93.

<sup>12</sup> Germer, Christopher K., Paul R. Fulton, and Ronald D. Siegel, *Mindfulness and Psychotherapy* (New York: Guilford Press, 2005), 3-27.

Van Dam, Nicholas T., Marieke K. van Vugt, David R. Vago, et al. “Mind the Hype: A Critical Evaluation and Prescriptive Agenda for Research on Mindfulness and Meditation,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 1 (2017): 36–61.

<sup>13</sup> Kabat-Zinn, Jon, “Mindfulness-Based Interventions in Context: Past, Present, and Future,” *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 2 (2003): 144–56.

<sup>14</sup> Bishop, Scott R., Mark Lau, Shauna Shapiro, Linda Carlson, Nicole D. Anderson, James Carmody, Zindel V. Segal, et al. “Mindfulness: A Proposed Operational Definition,” *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 11 (2004): 230–41.

<sup>15</sup> Parsons, Christine E., Catherine Crane, Liam J. Parsons, Lone Overby Fjorback, and Willem Kuyken, “Home Practice in Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Participants’ Mindfulness Practice and Its Association with Outcomes,” *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 95 (2017): 29–41.

<sup>16</sup> Somers, Brian. 2021. “Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta Influences on the Practices of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy: Considering the Contributions of Buddhist Theory”, *The Korean Association for Buddhist Studies* 98 (2021): 247 – 280.

<sup>17</sup> Grossman, Paul, Ludger Niemann, Stefan Schmidt, and Harald Walach. “Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction and Health Benefits: A Meta-analysis” *Journal of Psychosomatic Research* 57 (2004.): 35–43.

mindfulness, including a clear and flexible awareness that is non-discriminatory and non-conceptual,<sup>18</sup> an empirical approach to reality<sup>19</sup>, present-centeredness, and stable and continuous attention.<sup>20</sup> Intuitively, mindfulness is commonly perceived as a mental state rather than a personality trait. Although mindfulness can be cultivated through various practices, such as meditation and daily activities, it is essential to note that these terms are not interchangeable or synonymous, as each approach may provide unique perspectives in particular settings and objectives.<sup>21</sup>

The Buddhist notion of ‘sati’<sup>22</sup> is rendered into English as ‘mindfulness’. The word ‘sati’ derives the meaning of ‘memory’ and ‘remembrance’, but it more frequently refers to the meaning of ‘attention’ or ‘awareness’ oriented to the present in Buddhist usage; hence the invented translation of ‘mindfulness’ for this is later use only.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, ‘sati’ in Buddhist teachings is limited to the type of awareness that is considered good, skilful, or correct (kusala). The term ‘paṭṭhāna’ refers to ‘keeping present’, ‘keeping near’, and ‘establishing’.<sup>24</sup> Mindfulness can be defined, based on the Satipattāna *Sutta*, as a more excellent state of mind through which covetousness and discontent are set aside and contemplation is brought to directly experiencing the body as a body,<sup>25</sup> feeling as feeling, mind as mind, and mind-elements as mind-elements.<sup>26</sup>

According to the Buddhist perspective, the term “sati” does not completely encompass an entire range of human memory but is somewhat limited to the retention and recollection of objects perceived through the senses.<sup>27</sup> Despite this limitation, it is still considered a faculty of the human mind and can be developed to acquire knowledge related to past lives.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, it may be more appropriate to clarify the ambiguous term “sati” in the context of “mindfulness” instead of memory. The Satipattāna *Sutta* elaborates on various methods for cultivating mindfulness.

## MINDFULNESS-BASED COGNITIVE THERAPY

MBCT is a therapeutic method developed by that Zindel V. Segal, J. Mark G. Williams, and John D. Teasdale eventually developed. The MBCT program employs various meditation techniques and practical exercises derived from Cognitive Therapy to foster mindfulness among participants. The aim is to increase

<sup>18</sup> Kabat-Zinn, Jon. “Mindfulness-Based Interventions in Context: Past, Present, and Future.” *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 2 (2003): 144–56.

<sup>19</sup> Bishop, Scott R., Mark Lau, Shauna Shapiro, et al., “Mindfulness: A Proposed Operational Definition.” *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 11 (2004): 230–41.

<sup>20</sup> Lutz, Antoine, Heleen A. Slagter, John D. Dunne, and Richard J. Davidson. “Attention Regulation and Monitoring in Meditation.” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 12 (2008): 163–69.

<sup>21</sup> Davis, Daphne M., and Jeffrey A. Hayes. “What Are the Benefits of Mindfulness? A Practice Review of Psychotherapy-Related Research.” *Psychotherapy* 48 (2011): 198–208.

<sup>22</sup> Sanskrit: smṛti, √sar – Sarati – remembering

<sup>23</sup> Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2005): 3.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>25</sup> The phrase “Body as Body” also suggests that the body should be considered as a body and not as a man, a woman, a self, or a living being. A similar consideration applies to all of the other three mindfulness foundations.

<sup>26</sup> Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu, and Bhikkhu Bodhi (Translated by). *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*. (USA: Wisdom Publications, 2005): 145.

<sup>27</sup> Gethin, Rupert, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, (UK: Oneworld Publications, 2011), 32-36.

<sup>28</sup> Anālayo, Bhikkhu, *Satipattāna: The Direct Path to Realization*, (UK: Windhorse Publications, 2003),27.

awareness of experiences in the present moment without changing the negative thinking patterns.<sup>29</sup> Over time, MBCT has become more accessible to different populations, and it is now the most widely used eight-week program utilizing daily mindfulness practice for a range of medical and psychiatric disorders, including risk for depressive relapse.

The MBCT program includes eight two-hour sessions and many meditation practices such as body scanning, sitting and walking meditation, mindful movements and therapeutic methods including focusing on daily routines, and periods of three-minute breathing spaces as therapeutic methods.<sup>30</sup> Initially, There is greater emphasized on body sensations and breathing at first. The emphasis shifts to developing awareness of emotions and mind factors. Homework is necessary, and participants are encouraged to practice mindfulness activities or exercises designed with particular objectives for forty-five minutes daily.<sup>31</sup>

#### FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

The discourse on the “four foundations of mindfulness”, the Satipaṭṭhāna *Sutta*, appears on *Dīgha Nikāya*, and *Majjhima Nikāya* is a crucial text for meditation instructions of Buddhist mindfulness. This discourse explains four foundations/ establishing/ contemplation (paṭṭhāna) of mindfulness. The Buddha introduced Satipaṭṭhāna *Sutta* using the following words:

“This is the direct path for the purification of beings (sattānaṃ visuddhiyā) for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation (soka pariddavānaṃ samatikkhamāya), for the gaining of the right path (ñāyassa adhigamāya), for the realization of Nibbāna (nibbānassa saccikiriyāca); namely, the four foundations of mindfulness.”<sup>32</sup>

In Buddhist philosophy, the Satipaṭṭhāna *Sutta* is a crucial text emphasizing the path to a meaningful life. This path includes four essential contemplations of mindfulness: “the contemplation of the body” (kāyānupassanā), “the contemplation of feelings” (vedanānupassanā), “the contemplation of the mind” (cittānupassanā), and “the contemplation of mind-objects” (dhammānupassanā). These foundations are subdivided into thirteen practices, including six methods of observing the body and five methods of observing mind-objects. The contemplation of body involves enhancing awareness of the body through six methods namely, “mindfulness of breathing (ānapānasati), mindfulness of four-posture (iriyāpata), full awareness (sampajañña), awareness of thirty-two body parts (patikūla manasikāra), awareness of elements (dhātu manasikāra), and the nine charnel ground contemplations (nava-sivathika manasikāra)”<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Segal, Zindel, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale. *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression, Second Edition*. (New York: Guilford Publications, 2013),68.

<sup>30</sup> Somers, Brian, “Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna *Sutta* Influences on the Practices of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy: Considering the Contributions of Buddhist Theory,” *The Korean Association for Buddhist Studies* 98 (2021): 247 – 280.

<sup>31</sup> Segal, Zindel, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale, *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression, Second Edition* (New York: Guilford Publications, 2013),109.

Sipe, Walter E B, and Stuart J Eisendrath, “Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy: Theory and Practice,” *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 57 (2012): 63–69.

<sup>32</sup> Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2005):335.

<sup>33</sup> DN (C<sup>o</sup>) II 290.

Further, the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* presents nine distinct feelings, encompassing both pleasant and unpleasant feelings, as well as those that are neutral, in its discourse on the contemplation of feelings (*vedanā*). The *Sutta* also distinguishes between sensual and non-sensual feelings within these categories. The contemplation of mind involves developing a greater awareness of one's mind and its contents. The *Sutta* provides a collection of sixteen mental states, including negative qualities such as lust, hatred, illusion, constriction, and distraction, as well as those surpassed, developed, or liberated from such negative attributes.

The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*'s final aspect of contemplation involves the observation of mind-objects (*dhammā*). This includes five hindrances (*pañca nīvarana*), five aggregates (*khandha*), six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*), awareness of the seven factors of enlightenment (*satta bojjhaṅga*), and four noble truths (*caturāriya sacca*). The five hindrances which can obstruct one's ability to focus and be mindful are desire (*kāmachanda*), anger (*vyāpāda*), torpor (*thīnamiddha*), worry and flurry (*uddacca kukkucca*), and doubt (*vicikiccā*). Practitioners can identify these hindrances in their minds and take steps to overcome them. The five aggregates are "physical form (*rūpa*), feelings (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), thoughts (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)". By contemplating these aggregates, practitioners can obtain a realization of the nature of existence and the impermanence of all phenomena. The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* also recommends developing mindfulness on the six sense bases and the seven factors of enlightenment (*satta - bojjhaṅga dhamma*) viz. mindfulness (*Sati*), inquiry into Dhamma (*dhamma vicaya*), striving (*viriya*), rapture or joy (*pīti*), tranquility (*passadhi*), concentration (*samādhi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*), which can lead to a more profound realization of the nature of reality and the attainment of enlightenment.

In Buddhist mindfulness, the fourth foundation encompasses the contemplation of mind-objects (*dhammā*) and incorporates the four noble truths (*caturāriya sacca*), which include the truth about suffering (*dukkha*), the truth about the origin of suffering (*samudaya*), the truth about the cessation of suffering (*nirōdha*), and the truth about the path leading to the cessation of suffering (*magga sacca*). This contemplation of mind-objects differs from the previous three contemplations of mindfulness, as it provides a framework for exploring and considering various *dhammās*, such as the five hindrances and the five aggregates.<sup>34</sup>

### **MBCT AND SATIPAṬṬHĀNA SUTTA**

The four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭāna*) establish the theoretical foundation for mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT). In MBCT intervention, a number of techniques, including body scans, sitting meditation, walking meditation, and other contemplative practices, are incorporated. These practices are related to the teaching of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, which systematically examines body sensations, feelings, mind states, and mental objects.

<sup>34</sup> DN (C<sup>e</sup>) II 436-503.

## AUTOMATIC PILOT

Within the context of MBCT, the term “automatic pilot” is defined as the state of mind where habitual actions are performed without conscious awareness of the present moment.<sup>35</sup> This indicates a disconnection between the mind and body, resulting in mechanical behaviour. The mind has two primary modes, “doing” mode and “being” mode. The “doing” mode is characterized by automatic and ingrained behavior, while the “being” mode involves a heightened awareness of the present moment. While the “Driven-Doing” mode is helpful in goal-oriented setting and problem-solving, it can be problematic when applied to internal thoughts and feelings.<sup>36</sup>

Buddhism presents various perspectives on the nature of the mind. According to the *Dhammapada*, the wise one aligns the wavering and unsteady mind, which is difficult to protect and control, with the precision of an arrow-maker straightening an arrow. Additionally, the following stanza from the *Dhammapada* offers an advanced understanding of the concept of “Automatic Pilot” and its nature. The statement of *Dhammapada* “*dūrangamaṃ ekacaram - asariraṃ guhāsayaṃ, ye cittaṃ saṃyamessanti - mōkkhanti mārabandhanā.*”<sup>37</sup> It describes how those who can master their minds and live in isolation, free from physical constraints, can liberate themselves from the shackles of Māra.

The ‘Driven-Doing’ mode presents resonance with the core Buddhist teachings. The *Dhammapada* emphasizes the difficulty of controlling the wandering mind and the nature of the mind. The ‘Driven-Doing’ mode, characterized by automated and habitual activities, follows the Buddhist notion of ‘*ekacaram*’ or single-minded pursuit.<sup>38</sup> This alignment is evident in the *Dhammapada* verse, ‘*dūrangamaṃ ekacaram - asariraṃ guhāsayaṃ,*’ which underscores the challenge of controlling the wandering mind, suggesting an inherent tendency towards driven action.

## ESTABLISHING THE ORIENTATION OF THE CLASS

‘Establishing the orientation of the class’, the initial step in session one of MBCT and the starting explanation of *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, shows a strong parallel in introducing the program’s framework, goals, and objectives to the participants or followers. In MBCT, it is essential to familiarize participants with the program’s structure, objectives, principles, and expectations through the program.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* sets the purpose, framework, and goals of four-foundations of mindfulness practice.

The Buddha prescribed the four foundations of mindfulness as the direct path to purify beings, overcome sorrow, pain, and grief, to attain the proper way, and to realize *Nibbāna*. The four foundations are as follows: firstly, ardent contemplation of the body as a body through applying full awareness and

<sup>35</sup> Crane, Rebecca, *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 21.

<sup>36</sup> Segal, Zindel, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale, *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression, Second Edition* (New York: Guilford Publications, 2013), 67.

<sup>37</sup> KN(C<sup>e</sup>) I 34

<sup>38</sup> KN(C<sup>e</sup>) I 34

<sup>39</sup> Segal, Zindel, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale, *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression, Second Edition* (New York: Guilford Publications, 2013), 94.

mindfulness while abandoning covetousness and worldly grief; secondly, contemplating feelings as feelings; thirdly, contemplating mind as mind; and finally, contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects - all with the same qualities of mindful awareness.<sup>40</sup>

## RAISIN EXERCISE

The Raisin Exercise is a brief exercise designed to cultivate awareness of the present moment and the senses, precisely taste, touch, and smell, by consuming a raisin. This exercise is commonly used to help individuals break free from habitual, automatic behaviour patterns, such as eating without fully engaging with the experience. By focusing on sensory awareness and shifting to a “being” mode, individuals can enhance their present-moment experience and cultivate a greater sense of mindfulness.<sup>41</sup> The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta provides a comprehensive framework for the study of the “Six Organs” of the senses and their objects (*āyatanapabbam*) as part of *dhammānupassanā* (contemplation of mental objects). This contemplative practice involves complicated cognitive processes, attention, awareness and analysis to understand the nature of the mind and its interactions with the external world.<sup>42</sup>

The Raisin Exercise is a short activity designed to increase concentration by focusing on a single stimulus, such as taste, touch and smell while eating a raisin. In contrast, the Six Organs, Senses, and Their Objects method provides a comprehensive framework for considering mental objects in the context of the six internal senses and the foundations of the external senses. This method aims to deepen the understanding of the nature of the mind and its interaction with the external world by examining different levels of attention, consciousness, perception, mental analysis and cognitive functions. The Sutta guides understanding and observing the sense organs and their associated objects, such as the body, the objects of thought, material things, sounds, smells, tastes and sights.

This method aims to enhance the comprehension of the nature of the mind and its intricate interaction with the external world through examination of various of attention, consciousness, perception, mental analysis, and cognitive functioning. The Sutta provides guidance on observing and understanding the sense organs and their associated objects, such as the body, thought objects, tangibles, noises, scents, flavors, and sights.

## BODY SCAN PRACTICE

Body scan practice, a mindfulness meditation, includes paying systematic attention to various body parts. Its goal is to make bodily sensations more conscious and improve one’s capacity for observation and control over their experiences. Its purpose is to bring awareness to physical sensations and strengthen the ability to observe and regulate their experiences.<sup>43</sup> The ‘Foulness – Bodily Parts’ (*paṭikūlamānasikārapabbam*)

<sup>40</sup> Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu, and Bhikkhu Bodhi (Translated by), *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (USA: Wisdom Publications, 2005):145.

<sup>41</sup> Segal, Zindel, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale, *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression, Second Edition*. (New York: Guilford Publications, 2013),111.

<sup>42</sup> DN (C<sup>e</sup>) II 470

<sup>43</sup> Segal, Zindel, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale, *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression, Second Edition*, (New York: Guilford Publications, 2013),120.

directs the monks to analyze the body from the bottom of the feet to the top of the hair, to recognize its real nature with wisdom.

The ‘Body Scan Practice’ and the ‘Foulness – Bodily Parts’ meditation involve a detailed awareness of the body. The Body Scan Practice involves a focus on the body’s sensations and breathing. In contrast, the *paṭikūlamānasikārapabbaṃ* technique consists in paying attention to all thirty-two (32) parts of the body with a specific emphasis on their true nature, and the Sutta describes the body as containing various bodily parts, including head-hairs, body-hairs, and urine etc.<sup>44</sup>

The Buddhist Body Scan practice and the Body Scan of MBCT have a shared theoretical basis in the significance of mindfulness and body awareness. According to Buddhist doctrines, mindfulness of the body is crucial for meditation and spiritual growth. The *paṭikūlamānasikārapabbaṃ* practice involves the contemplation of impermanence and non-self while examining the various parts of the body. Similarly, the MBCT’s Body Scan practice emphasizes bodily sensations and aims to develop non-judgmental awareness to promote mindfulness.

## **MINDFULNESS OF A ROUTINE ACTIVITY**

The MBCT program introduces the “mindfulness of a routine activity” informal practice, which prompts participants to maintain awareness during everyday tasks, such as brushing teeth or showering, and select one activity to perform mindfully each day until the next class. This exercise encourages individuals to shift from the habitual “driven-doing” mode to the “being” mode.<sup>45</sup> In the same way, the *sampajaññapabbaṃ* method in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* guides mindfulness in routine activities, such as standing, walking, sitting, sleeping, defecating, and urinating, thus emphasizing continual presence and awareness in daily life.

The *sampajañña* method is grounded in clear comprehension, attention, discrimination, and knowing. It is associated with the practice of mindfulness in routine activities detailed in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. By deliberately directing attention and increasing awareness, individuals can foster mindfulness in daily activities and extend this heightened awareness to their daily routines.<sup>46</sup>

## **THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS EXERCISE, AND AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS QUESTIONNAIRE**

In MBCT, the ‘Thoughts and Feelings Exercise’ and the ‘Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire’ play vital roles. The ‘Thoughts and Feelings Exercise’ is a technique that helps individuals recognize the connection between their thoughts and emotions, which is useful in overcoming everyday obstacles. Meanwhile,

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<sup>44</sup> DN (C<sup>e</sup>) II 446

<sup>45</sup> Segal, Zindel, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale, *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression, Second Edition* (New York: Guilford Publications, 2013), 130.

<sup>46</sup> Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu, and Bhikkhu Bodhi (Translated by), *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (USA: Wisdom Publications, 2005): 147.

the Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire is used to identify negative thoughts associated with depression. People can separate themselves from these ideas and stay out of them by acknowledging them and engaging in mindfulness exercises.<sup>47</sup>

The contemplation of mind (*cittānupassanā*) involves observing and recognising various mental states, e.g., thoughts, modes of mind, and emotions. This is intended to help the practitioner attain insight into the nature of the mind and its thoughts. Sixteen mental states are observed in *Cittānupassanā*, which include:

...mind with craving (*sarāgṃ cittaṃ*), mind without craving (*vītaragṃ*), mind with aversion (*sadosaṃ cittaṃ*), mind without aversion (*vītadosaṃ cittaṃ*), mind with delusion (*samohaṃ cittaṃ*), mind without delusion (*vītamohaṃ cittaṃ*), collected mind (*saṅkhittaṃ cittaṃ*), scattered mind (*vikkhittaṃ cittaṃ*), expanded mind (*mahaggataṃ cittaṃ*), unexpanded mind (*amahaggataṃ cittaṃ*), surpassable mind (*sa-uttaraṃ cittaṃ*), unsurpassable mind (*anuttaraṃ cittaṃ*), concentrated mind (*samāhitaṃ cittaṃ*), scattered mind (*asamāhitaṃ cittaṃ*), freed mind (*vimuttaṃ cittaṃ*), and not freed mind (*avimuttaṃ cittaṃ*)...<sup>48</sup>

The theoretical underpinnings of these practices strongly emphasize how crucial it is to cultivate awareness and observe one's own thoughts objectively to facilitate improved emotional and cognitive regulation. By engaging in mindfulness practices, people can develop greater self-awareness and learn more adaptive and beneficial ways to respond to their thoughts and feelings.

## PLEASANT AND UNPLEASANT EXPERIENCES CALENDAR

The 'Awareness of Pleasant and Unpleasant Experiences' technique is used in MBCT to help people become more conscious of their thoughts and moods and identify the things that set off rumination. This technique involves identifying and categorizing one's emotions as either pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. The aim is to cultivate a heightened awareness of one's emotional patterns and to respond to them with mindfulness instead of automatic reactions.<sup>49</sup>

Contemplation of feelings (*vedanānupassanā*) is a practice that helps people recognize and understand the various kinds of emotions they experience. These feelings include those that are both pleasant and unpleasant ones, as well as those that are neutral. The practice also involves distinguishing between worldly and non-worldly feelings such as worldly pleasurable and non-worldly pleasurable feelings, worldly painful and non-worldly painful feelings, and worldly and non-worldly feelings that are neither-painful-nor-pleasant. By understanding these varied sentiments, individuals can gain insight into the true nature of all things and cultivate detachment and equanimity towards them.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Segal, Zindel, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale, *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression, Second Edition* (New York: Guilford Publications, 2013), 160/234.

<sup>48</sup> DN (C<sup>e</sup>) II 446

<sup>49</sup> Segal, Zindel, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale, *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression, Second Edition* (New York: Guilford Publications, 2013), 204.

<sup>50</sup> Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu, and Bhikkhu Bodhi (Translated by), *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*. (USA: Wisdom Publications, 2005): 149.

In the context of MBCT, the ‘Pleasant and Unpleasant Experiences Calendar’ is based on the contemplation of feelings, also known as *vedanānupassana*. Although both techniques involve observing feelings, MBCT emphasises developing awareness of emotional patterns and responding mindfully. *Vedanānupassanā* is a Buddhist meditation practice aimed at understanding the nature of the mind and body and attaining liberation from suffering. Nevertheless, both techniques share the common goal of observing experiences without judgment and cultivating detachment.

## SITTING MEDITATION

The practice of sitting meditation, as employed in MBCT, involves concentrating on the breath and physical sensations throughout the body. Commencing with focusing on the breath, the practice gradually expands awareness of the physical sensations throughout the body. Despite the mind’s tendency to drift away from the breath and body sensations, the practitioner should softly redirect their attention back to the present moment.<sup>51</sup>

The practice of sitting meditation is rooted in the Buddhist tradition and is based on the first foundation of mindfulness, which is Mindfulness of Breathing. In this practice, the individual assumes a comfortable, upright position and directs their attention to the sensation of breathing in their body. The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* provides a five-step guide for mindfulness of breath, starting with simply being aware of the breath and progressing to training oneself to calm the breath and experience peace throughout the entire body. These steps explained in *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* include practising mindfulness by focusing on the inhalation and exhalation, becoming aware of the duration of the length of breath, practicing experiencing the entire body with each breath, and concentrating on relaxing the breathing process and remaining in the present moment. These steps lead to a sense of peace and tranquility as the meditator develops a greater understanding of their body sensations and a more profound sense of mindfulness.<sup>52</sup>

## MINDFUL WALKING

Mindful walking is a crucial element of MBCT, and it is introduced in session four as a means of fostering greater bodily awareness. Participants are advised to reduce their walking pace and focus on each step, with no predetermined destination in mind. The practice entails developing an awareness of the bodily sensations that accompany each step and releasing any mental or emotional reactions to those sensations.<sup>53</sup>

In comparison to MBCT intervention, Buddhist walking meditation (*caṅkama*) is more comprehensive and structured. It places a significant emphasis not only on the act of walking but also on the body’s posture during sitting, standing, and lying down. In the Buddhist tradition, walking meditation involves progressing through various stages of walking with the overarching goal of gradually deepening

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<sup>51</sup> Segal, Zindel, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale, *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression, Second Edition* (New York: Guilford Publications, 2013), 164.

<sup>52</sup> DN (C<sup>e</sup>) II 438.

<sup>53</sup> Segal, Zindel, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale, *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression, Second Edition* (New York: Guilford Publications, 2013), 241.

one's awareness of the body.<sup>54</sup> While MBCT's mindful walking and the Buddhist approach to walking meditation offer distinct advantages, individuals who prefer a more structured and comprehensive method may find the Buddhist approach more beneficial. It caters to a holistic awareness of the body in different postures. Despite their differences, both approaches share the common objective of enhancing bodily awareness and can serve as effective means for cultivating mindfulness in daily life.

## CONCLUSION

Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy is designed to manage the recurrence of depression by inducing a shift in the way individuals engage with negative thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. MBCT integrates traditional Buddhist teachings and practices, especially the four foundations of mindfulness described in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, with modern psychological knowledge. It is a clinically effective way to manage patients with mood disorders. It is essential to recognize that MBCT was developed within a Western psychological framework and is not directly rooted in Buddhism. This intervention employs several mindfulness techniques and practices, including body scan, sitting meditation, walking meditation, and raisin exercise, to foster consciousness of mental phenomena. Future studies can enhance further exploration into MBCT's theoretical underpinnings and the mechanisms of its efficacy through its connections with traditional Buddhist practices.

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<sup>54</sup> Gunarathana Thera, Henepola. *Mindfulness in Plain English* (USA: Wisdom Publication, 2011), 140.

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