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# HANDOUT 2: SESSION 02

## Mindfulness based relapse prevention for problem gambling

### Barriers to meditation

Mindfulness meditation has been around for thousands of years and so have the barriers to meditation. These barriers are quite common and everyone experiences them. It does not mean that you are doing it wrong. Refer back to how we define mindfulness meditation.

*Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgementally. – Jon Kabat-Zinn*

From the definition, it is about noticing with curiosity and non-judgement whatever is happening in the present moment and not about doing it right, nor is it about getting rid of whatever is happening before being able to practice. We don't have to wait for conditions to be right before we can practice.

Barriers to meditation can originate from five main areas or habits of mind as described by Bowen, Chawla and Marlatt (2011) and Fronsdal (2016). The following are a list of these habits that become barriers:

- 1 Desire/sensual pleasures:** Includes craving, wanting, pulling toward, not content with the present moment and wanting something else other than what is. People may not necessarily see this as a bad thing.
- 2 Aversion and ill-will:** Not wanting to focus on the here and now can generate feelings such as irritation, anger, frustration. Aversion can be the flip side of the desire mentioned above.
- 3 Sloth and torpor/sleepiness and sluggishness:** A goal of practicing mindfulness is to develop a mind that is both tranquil and alert. Too much tranquility and no alertness leads to drowsiness, sluggishness, low energy, sleepiness and lethargy. Too much alertness without tranquility can lead to tension and anxiety (discussed below). Sloth and torpor can be a reaction to the constant habit of tension and anxiety.
- 4 Restlessness and anxiety or worry:** Sometimes, putting too much effort into anything can result in agitation of mind or the feeling that the mind is racing. This is the opposite of Barrier 3 (sloth, sleepiness and sluggishness). You need to find a balance between being overly tranquil and being overly alert.

- 5 Doubt:** Doubt serves to confuse us and make us indecisive, causing us to hold back and not fully apply ourselves. It's a mood that creates feelings of uncertainty and can create more doubt. "To have doubts about the value of mindfulness, borders on having doubts about the value of being present for life in general". (Fronsdal, 2016, p. 7)
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The barriers noted above are not only barriers to meditation, but can also be barriers to what we want to do in life. They can colour and dull the mind. When these barriers are absent, the mind is clear and sharp. These habits are based on Bowen, Chawla and Marlatt (2011) and Fronsdal (2016).

To help you address the hindrances, use the RAIN Formula (Fronsdal, 2016).

### The Rain Formula

**R Recognize** them when present as barriers.

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**A Accept** them.

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**I Investigate** them. Be curious about your doubts, your desires, and your aversions. What are they like? How do they feel in terms of energy, belief, emotion, physical nature? Do you have an urge to act?

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**N Non-identification** with them. Such feelings are just passing mental events and impermanent in nature.

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**List hindrances and barriers to practice mindfulness that you've experienced:**

Hindrance or barrier to meditation you have experienced	Write out a plan of how to overcome this barrier