

Welcome to Class #1

Many of us ride around as if in a **driverless car**, on **autopilot**. Some of us feel as if we're surrounded, sometimes overwhelmed by the constant mental chattering known as *monkey mind*! **The first skill we'll work with this session will be focus:** The ability to direct our attention where we want and need it. Up until now we have talked mostly **about** mindfulness and awareness. This session we will begin to **practice mindfulness skills**.

A supportive and safe classroom environment is important as we work with mindfulness skills. We are all responsible for contributing to this in the following ways:

- **Privacy should be honored at all times.** There will be time in class to talk with one another about your learning experiences. Feel free to discuss YOUR experiences with whomever you wish, but do not discuss things shared by others in the classroom with people outside the class.
- **Support and respect others by listening.** One of the most important things you can do for yourself and others in the class is to *listen intently as people speak*. Comments and responses to one another can be helpful and appropriate, but there is *no need to provide advice, solve problems or "rescue" one another* from unpleasant or difficult experiences. If you are here with a friend or partner, this may require that you change habitual responses. Your job is to listen with an open ear and an open heart.
- Practice **non-judgment** and **non-striving**, starting with yourself! Mindfulness is not about acquiring anything other than clarity about each moment. Mindfulness will bring you into the full range of your experience, from the *unpleasant*, to the *mundane (neutral)* to the *pleasant*. Mindfulness is *staying with* experience, rather than constantly trying to get or be somewhere else.
- **Stillness** will be more frequent in this class than in most other areas of your life. It can take some getting used to! As your practice continues you will find that stillness can lead to greater awareness, and ultimately more fullness in your life.
- **Commitment to Practice** is known to enhance the quality of learning in this course. Work with the cd's and home practice assignments, with gentle persistence. Forgive yourself when you fall short.

