

**Mindfulness and Integral Presence**  
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## Mindfulness and Integral Presence

This paper aims at clarifying what mindfulness and Integral Presence (IP) are and how they relate to, and differ from, each other.

### What are the origins of mindfulness?

Mindfulness has been at the essence of contemplative practices for thousands of years.

The history of mindfulness can be traced back throughout religions - Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam<sup>1</sup>.

#### *Buddhist Origins*<sup>2</sup>

The original meaning and force of mindfulness can best be understood against the background of its natural home within the foundations of Buddhism. In the context of the Dharma<sup>3</sup>, mindfulness is of overriding importance. Technically, mindfulness is the seventh strand of the noble eightfold path (see summary table below) which is designed to lead to the end of suffering, but this needs to be interpreted within the framework of the four noble truths<sup>4</sup> as laid out in the second table below.

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<i>Noble eightfold path</i>		
Wisdom	Morality	Mental Culture
1. Right understanding	3. Right speech	6. Right effort
2. Right thought	4. Right action	7. <a href="#">Right mindfulness</a>
	5. Right livelihood	8. Right concentration

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<i>Four noble truths</i>	<i>Twelve Turnings</i>
Suffering	Recognition: This is suffering Encouragement: Suffering should be understood Realisation: Suffering is understood
Arising of suffering	Recognition: This is an ignoble way that has led to suffering Encouragement: That ignoble way should be understood Realisation: That ignoble way is understood
Cessation of suffering (well-being)	Recognition: Well-being is possible Encouragement: Well-being should be obtained Realisation: Well-being is obtained
How well-being arises	Recognition: There is a noble path that leads to well-being Encouragement: The noble path has to be lived Realisation: The noble path is lived

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<sup>1</sup> Trousselard et al., 2014

<sup>2</sup> Mindfulness & Learning, Terry Hyland, Springer, p25-27

<sup>3</sup> Literally the fundamental nature of the universe revealed in the Buddhist canon of teachings and precepts

<sup>4</sup> The important original texts for this section are available freely on [www.accesstoinsight.org](http://www.accesstoinsight.org). The Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta is the Buddha's first "sermon," setting out the middle way and four noble truths. See <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.than.html>

Two main ancient texts explore more deeply what mindfulness is.

1. The Maha-**sati**patthana Sutta<sup>5</sup> delineates and describes the four foundations of mindfulness<sup>6</sup>. The four foundations are:
  - mindfulness of the body (including mindfulness of the breath)
  - mindfulness of feelings or sensations
  - mindfulness of mind
  - mindfulness of mental qualities/factors
2. The Anapanasati Sutta provides detailed instructions in the practice of mindfulness specifically working with the breath<sup>7</sup>.

“Mindfulness”, as used in ancient texts, is an English translation of the Pali<sup>8</sup> word, **sati**, which connotes awareness, attention, and remembering. The first dictionary translation of sati into “mindfulness” dates back to 1921 (Davids & Stede 1921/2001).

### *Modern Interpretations of Mindfulness<sup>9</sup>*

As mindfulness is adopted by Western psychotherapy and migrates away from its ancient roots, its meaning is expanding. Most notably, mental qualities beyond sati (awareness, attention, and remembering) are being included in “mindfulness”. These qualities include non-judgment, acceptance, and compassion.

Jon Kabat-Zinn, the foremost pioneer in the therapeutic application of mindfulness, defines it as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment to moment” (Kabat-Zinn 2003, p. 145).

Kabat-Zinn (2003) explains that the Buddhist origins of mindfulness reveal a coherent phenomenological description of the nature of the mind, emotion, suffering and its potential release, based on highly refined practices aimed at systematically training and cultivating various aspects of mind and heart via the faculty of attention...And mindfulness, it should be noted, being about attention, is also of necessity universal. There is nothing particularly Buddhist about it<sup>10</sup>.

In 2004, Bishop et al. (2004) offered a consensus paper on the definition of mindfulness: Mindfulness is “self-regulation of attention so that it is maintained on immediate experience, thereby allowing for increased recognition of mental events in the present moment” and “adopting a particular orientation toward one’s experience that is

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<sup>5</sup> (The Discourse on the Establishing of Mindfulness)

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.22.0.than.html>

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.118.than.html>

<sup>8</sup> Pali is the language in which the teachings of the Buddha were originally recorded.

<sup>9</sup> Clinical Handbook of mindfulness, Fabrizio Didonna, Springer, page 18

<sup>10</sup> Cfr. Mindfulness & Learning page 28.

Buddha himself was not a Buddhist ; the word “Buddha” means « awakened » ; mindfulness, often spoken of as “the heart of Buddhist meditation”, has little or nothing to do with Buddhism per se, and everything to do with wakefulness, compassion, and wisdom.

characterized by curiosity, openness, and acceptance” (p. 232)<sup>11</sup>.

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*Jan’s definition of mindfulness is “living consciously what is”  
supplemented with 8 attitudes that support mindfulness.*

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In other words and said simply mindfulness is a way of paying kind and open attention, in the present moment, to ourselves, others and the world around us. Mindfulness is the awareness of what’s happening as it’s happening in both the inside and the outside world. Mindfulness is a way of relating to our experience that can reduce suffering and set the stage for positive personal transformation. It is a core psychological process that can alter how we respond to the unavoidable difficulties/stress in life<sup>12</sup>.

Mindfulness is not something new, it refers to the innate, constitutive capacity of human beings to be fully conscious and aware. Mindfulness is a quality of presence.

Jon Kabat Zinn also mentioned in one of his scientific articles that he uses the word Mindfulness as a synonym for awareness or pure awareness<sup>13</sup>.

Jon Kabat-Zinn described the 9 foundational attitudes of mindfulness<sup>14</sup> which are not independent from each other and are working together as follows:

1. Beginner’s Mind
2. Non-Judgment
3. Acceptance
4. Non-striving
5. Letting Go
6. Patience
7. Trust
8. Gratitude
9. Generosity

It should also be noted that, since in Asian languages, the word for «mind » and the word for « heart » are usually the same, we cannot fully understand the word « mindfulness » in English without simultaneously hearing or feeling the word « heartfulness ». They are one and the same. Thus, the meditative cultivation of mindfulness, whether formally or informally, involves intentionally, as best we can, bringing an openhearted and affectionate attention to our experience. This points to the essential non-separation between mindfulness and compassion<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Clinical Handbook of mindfulness, page 19

<sup>12</sup> Idem, page 17

<sup>13</sup> Jon Kabat-Zinn 2017, « Too Early to Tell: The Potential Impact and Challenges -Ethical and Otherwise - Inherent in the Mainstreaming of Dharma in an Increasingly Dystopian World »

<sup>14</sup> listen to Jon Kabat Zinn through <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2n7FOBFMvXg>

<sup>15</sup> Idem note 13

## Brief history and evolution of “modern mindfulness”

In the late 1970s, mindfulness was brought as a **secular practice** to mainstream medicine by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D. in molecular biology from MIT, Professor of Medicine Emeritus at the University of Massachusetts Medical School and yoga teacher/practitioner and meditator.

He founded the Stress Reduction Clinic in 1979 and the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program (MBSR)<sup>16</sup> was designed to help people to learn how to use their innate resources and abilities to respond more effectively to stress, pain, and illness.

MBSR brought together science, medicine, and psychology, on the one hand, and Buddhist meditative traditions, their teachings and practices, known collectively as the Dharma, on the other<sup>17</sup>. One reason MBSR proved viable in mainstream clinical settings is that the Dharma is in essence universal. Mindfulness, often being spoken of as "the heart of Buddhist meditation," and being primarily about the systematic training and refinement of attention and awareness, compassion and wisdom, is a manifestation of its universal applicability.<sup>18</sup>

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is a well-defined and systematic patient-centered **educational approach** which uses relatively intensive training in mindfulness meditation as the core of a program to teach people how to take better care of themselves and live healthier and more adaptive lives. This model has been successfully utilized with appropriate modifications in non-medical settings such as schools, prisons, athletic training programs, professional programs, and the workplace.

The effectiveness of this eight-week MBSR program has been, and increasingly is, supported by thousands of scientific research studies, which supported in turn the development of a whole family of what are now called mindfulness-based interventions for specific purposes, such as:

- MBCT - Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (Segal, Teasdale, and Williams, 2002),
- MBRP - Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention, for addictive behaviors (Bowan, Chawla, and Marlatt, 2011);
- MBCP - Mindfulness-Based Childbirth and Parenting (Bardacke, 2012);
- MBEAT - Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Training (Kristeller, Baer, and Quillian-Wolever, 2006);
- MBEC - Mindfulness-Based Elder Care (McBee, 2008).

Integrating such mindfulness-based approaches into medicine, healthcare, psychology, neuroscience, business, leadership, education, the law, and other major societal institutions has become a burgeoning field. We are currently witnessing an explosion of interest in

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<sup>16</sup> It is often described as a mind training or attention training in secular settings.

<sup>17</sup> « The intention and approach behind MBSR were never meant to exploit, fragment, or decontextualize the dharma, but rather to recontextualize it within the frameworks of science, medicine (including psychiatry and psychology), and health care so that it would be maximally useful to people who could not hear it or enter into it through the more traditional dharma gates, whether they were doctors or medical patients, hospital administrators, or insurance companies ».

Jon Kabat Zinn, 2011, « Some reflections on the origins of MBSR, skillful means and the trouble with maps »

<sup>18</sup> see Center for Mindfulness website

mindfulness among the society as a whole.

Such developments have major implications, of course, for the kinds of training required to skillfully deliver mindfulness-based interventions in a range of different environments without omitting or denaturing their dharma essence.<sup>19</sup>

### **What is not mindfulness?**

To better understand what mindfulness is it can be useful to look at what it is not.

Mindfulness practices all involve some form of meditation<sup>20</sup>. Misconceptions about meditation practice abound, especially in the West. It may be therefore helpful to examine some of the most common misunderstandings.

#### *Mindfulness is not about emptying the mind*

While some concentration practices are designed to empty the mind of thought, this is not an aim of mindfulness practice. Instead, mindfulness practice involves training the mind to be aware of what it is doing at all times, including being aware that we are thinking when we think (minds produce thoughts, it is what they are built for, and our mind keeps on producing them even if we are meditating).

So, we learn the skill of becoming aware of our thoughts, without necessarily doing anything with them (fighting, suppressing, acting on it). By just noticing thoughts, we learn how to unhook ourselves from our identification with them. This is different from pushing thoughts away. It is about how we relate to our thoughts, not the absence of them. It is about understanding how the mind works and what are its habitual thinking patterns.

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*This corresponds with the Neutral Observer aspect in IP.*

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#### *Mindfulness is not becoming emotionless<sup>21</sup>*

Many people secretly hope that mindfulness practice will relieve them of the burden of emotion. Especially when in distress, the fantasy of becoming emotionless can be quite appealing. In reality, mindfulness practice often has quite the opposite effect. Because we practice noticing the contents of the mind, we come to notice our emotions more fully and vividly. Our ability to recognize how we feel increases as we relinquish normal defences, such as distracting ourselves from discomfort with entertainment or eating.

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<sup>19</sup> Jon Kabat Zinn, 2011, « Some reflections on the origins of MBSR, skillful means and the trouble with maps »

<sup>20</sup> "Meditation" means the whole class of ways to train attention, mindfulness among them.

<sup>21</sup> Clinical Handbook of mindfulness, page 22

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*IP provides several tools for developing emotional intelligence and balance, like 'emotional fitness' (the practice of 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> subtle bodies), 'psychological integration' and the 'transformation cycle'. Yet mindfulness stays the inextricable basis for these other assets.*

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*Mindfulness is not about being calm or any particular way*

We often expect mindfulness will bring us peace or calm and relaxation. Although it is true that a sense of peace, calm, or relaxation can be experienced while practicing mindfulness, these are not guaranteed outcomes. Mindfulness is just about noticing whatever experience we are having, including all the thoughts, feelings or physical sensations that are a part of it, whether pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

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*"Living consciously what is."*

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*Mindfulness can significantly reduce stress but it is not about stress reduction*

Rather than remove stress, mindfulness helps us learn to relate to stress differently and to respond (instead of reacting automatically) to stressful experiences in a more healthy/adequate way. Mindfulness is really about "relationality", exploring how do we relate to what happens to us.

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*From the IP perspective, stress is the accumulation of non-digested life experiences (facts, thoughts, feelings, emotions, ...). IP will focus on the well-adjusted integration of these experiences and stress reduction is the natural and unconstructed consequence of this integration.*

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*Mindfulness is not escaping pain<sup>19</sup>*

Rather than escaping pain, mindfulness practice helps us to increase our capacity to bear it. We deliberately abstain from automatic actions designed to make ourselves feel better. For example, if we are meditating and an itch arises, a typical instruction is to observe the itch and notice any impulses that arise (such as the urge to scratch), but to not act on the urge. As a result, we actually experience pain and discomfort more vividly. This extends beyond itches and physical pain to include the full spectrum of emotional discomfort as well. As we explore and accept these unpleasant experiences, our capacity to bear them increases. We also discover that painful sensations are distinct from the suffering that accompanies them. We see that suffering arises when we react to pain with resistance, protest, or avoidance rather than moment-to-moment acceptance.

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*The IP philosophy makes a similar distinction between pain and suffering. The IP method holds a clear invitation to first see suffering as a signal of*

*dualistic perception of reality and secondly to use pain as a forward propelling power for addressing and transforming the root cause of this suffering. Mindfulness helps us to stop escaping from our experience of reality, both comfortable and uncomfortable, and with sustained practice it opens our awareness to the depth of our innate consciousness that resides beyond all pain and suffering.*

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### *Mindfulness is not about being complacent*

Acceptance does not mean agreement or complacency or resignation. It means acknowledging whatever's going on (because it is already happening). We take action to change situations when appropriate - for our well-being and the well-being of others - but we do so out of compassion and understanding versus reaction and frustration.

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*IP shares the same value of being radically honest with the reality of life. It particularly invites us to actively neutralize wishful thinking and replace it with clear vision. More concretely IP encourages us to dismantle intentionally our idealized images of self, others and life so that the innate truth of self, others, and life can shine through into our conscious awareness. – The IP ‘approach for changing situations when appropriate is the ‘cycle of transformation’. Similar to mindfulness, the cycle of transformation emerges from a genuine inner compassion and positive creativity and not from a place of defensiveness.*

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### *Mindfulness is not a technique*

Mindfulness is not something you do. It is a way of being. It is not a way to fix our problems. Mindfulness can help reducing depression, anxiety, stress or chronic pain, but not by fixing them. We learn to relate in a new way to the things that trouble us, rather than trying to make them go away.

Having a mindfulness practice is about training our minds so that we can more wisely cope with whatever comes our way.

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*IP contains both the active aspect of a method and the passive aspect of a spontaneously arising grace and wisdom, both the structured aspect of a technique as the unpremeditated aspect of a state of being, both a practice as a pure residing in authentic being.*

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### *Mindfulness is not a magic pill*

When we are under stress or going through a difficult time we might look for “techniques” to help us better cope. Mindfulness works, but it is important to approach it with the right attitude. Based on many years of research, it is well established that in order to fully benefit from mindfulness meditation, the best approach is to have a long-term view.



### *Mindfulness is not religious*

It is true that mindfulness has its roots in the age of Buddha, but no one owns mindfulness. Mindfulness has evolved and has now become the merging of ancient eastern philosophy and the latest western psychology. The beauty of mindfulness is that it is not a religion at all. However, all religions could greatly benefit from having a mindfulness practice.

Mindfulness practices are useful for all people, regardless of their spiritual or religious backgrounds or beliefs. It's a human experience that utilizes awareness and compassion that is within us all.

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*IP has both scientific and spiritual components. All practitioners are free to adopt whatever aspect of IP that serves them and let aside any aspect that is not useful for them. IP does not propose any belief system. It rather invites each of us to question our personal belief system in the light of seeking and finding truth within.*

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### *Mindfulness is not withdrawing from life<sup>19</sup>*

Because most meditation practices were originally refined by monks, nuns, and hermits, people often assume that they involve withdrawing from living a full, interpersonally rich life. While there are certainly benefits to be derived from practicing mindfulness in a simplified environment, even in these settings, one is not exactly withdrawing. Instead, the vicissitudes of life are experienced more vividly, because we are taking the time to pay attention to our moment-to-moment experience.

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*IP is very much a life integrated practice, hence the name INTEGRAL Presence. It happens IN life and FOR life. It promotes the realisation of transcendental awareness only to discover that transcendent consciousness is not dissociated from life yet intrinsically permeates and underlies all life and all its manifestations.*

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### *Mindfulness is not seeking bliss<sup>19</sup>*

The image of the spiritual master blissfully smiling while the rest of us struggle with existential reality is very appealing. Early in their meditation careers, many people become distressed when they find that their minds wander and they feel agitated or unsettled. While exceptionally pleasant states of mind do occur, in mindfulness meditation we allow them to arise and pass. Not clinging to blissful states nor rejecting unpleasant ones.

## What are the mindfulness practices?

Several mindfulness practices have been developed and organized into formal and informal practices (i.e. bringing that quality of presence in our daily activities).

### *Formal Practices*

Four main formal practices are proposed during MBSR/MBCT programs, “formal” in the sense of dedicating a specific time and space for the practice.

- Body scan
- Sitting meditation with different objects of attention :
  - breath
  - whole body
  - sounds
  - thoughts and emotions
  - choiceless or open awareness (giving up all objects of attention)
- Mindful movements (yoga)
- Mindful walking

The Loving Kindness Meditation is also introduced during the program where the intention is to cultivate a sense of kindness towards self, others and the world.

### Body Scan

The body scan focuses attention on physical sensations in the body, area by area. The practice is completed by “scanning” one’s awareness through the entire body on a micro level. Attention is given to every inch of the body. It is an effective method for developing both concentration and flexibility of attention simultaneously. The purpose of this practice is to cultivate body awareness, the ability to notice what is being experienced in the body moment to moment - this includes all of the systems of the body - bones, skin, internal organs, digestion, etc. This is a particularly useful practice to learn how physical experience is tied to emotional experience. For each emotion we experience, there is a way in which that emotion resides in the body, and by opening one’s attention to receiving this information, one can begin to learn how to better respond to physical and emotional signals and their interrelated cognition.

### Sitting meditation

To practice sitting, we make a special time and place for non-doing, consciously adopting an alert and relaxed body posture so that we can feel relatively comfortable without moving, and then we reside with calm acceptance in the present without trying to fill it with anything or change it in any way.

Watching the breath as it naturally flows in and out, receiving the physical sensations that are coming and going within the body, opening to the sounds that are rising and falling,

witnessing thoughts that are appearing and disappearing into the mind moment to moment, receiving the emotional component of each unfolding moment.

We can choose to practice sitting with an object of attention (such as the breath, the bodily sensations, the sounds, the thoughts or emotions and returning our attention to that object each time the mind wanders) or without any specific object, dwelling in awareness, being awareness itself.

#### Mindful movements (yoga)

In the same way, practicing yoga helps to inhabit the body with full awareness as it moves and breathes through gentle stretching, strengthening and balancing exercises. It is an effective way in which one can learn about oneself, work with one's own limits and come to experience ourselves as a whole (regardless of physical conditions or level of fitness). It is the opportunity to practice attitudes of patience and non-striving.

#### Walking meditation

The art of walking meditation is to learn to be aware as you walk, to use the natural movement of walking to cultivate mindfulness and wakeful presence, with different types of attention (from focused attention on the components of each step to broad/open attention on the entire body, to the whole environment).

#### Loving Kindness Meditation

Loving Kindness Meditation has the intention to evoke feelings of kindness, generosity, goodwill, love, compassion, and to direct them towards oneself, others (dear ones, "neutral" people, and people with whom we have a difficult relationship), other living beings and to the life-giving planet itself.

This practice helps to cultivate strong positive emotions within oneself and can be an antidote to self-criticism. It can also help to let go of any feelings of aversion, ill will or resentment.

#### *Informal Practices*

Informal practices involve reminding ourselves throughout the day to pay attention to what is happening in the moment without radically changing our routines. It means noticing the sensations of walking when we walk, the taste of our food when we eat, and the appearance of our surroundings as we pass through them.

Bringing non-judgmental awareness in our daily activities, such as for instance showering mindfully, noticing habitual ways of functioning, behaving, reacting, taking few minutes to cultivate awareness of the breath in the midst of our activities, cultivating kindness towards oneself and others, etc...

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*Integral Presence has 21 aspects. Each of the 21 aspects can be cultivated through techniques and training yet each aspect also represents a natural, inherent facet in the whole spectrum of our human consciousness.*

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## **Jan's approach to Mindfulness and Integral Presence<sup>22</sup>**

### *A few brief elements of Jan's background*

After a mystical experience in 1994, the need for understanding what happened led Jan to Tibetan Buddhism after a few months exploring several spiritual/healing traditions.

This Vajrayana tradition through tantric Buddhist teachings<sup>23</sup> gave Jan not only the confirmation about the reality of subtle energies he had been perceiving since childhood but also a way to handle his extreme sensitivity to these in order to maintain stability of mind and psyche. A combination of deep enthusiasm and urgent need to shoulder this marked receptiveness led Jan to practice for two hours a day and sometimes more during retreats.

His journey started through weekly encounters with different lamas (lama Karta, lama Zeupa, lama Tashi Nyima) in the Tibetan Buddhist institute in Schoten (Antwerp, Belgium).

Jan was advised to practice first Shine meditation (or '*Shamata*' in Sanskrit) which is a sitting meditation directing the mind towards one point in order to calm it (i.e. focusing on one specific object such as the breath and coming back to it each time the mind is distracted). Then naturally after some time of practice (1 to 2 years), Shine meditation leads naturally to Lagthong (or '*Vipassana*' in Sanskrit, '*Insight*' in English) meditation which gives a deeper insight on the nature of the mind. Mindfulness formal practices actually encompasses both of these practices (although this could be debated amongst purists/scholars, especially for Shine that is more oriented towards concentration than mindfulness).

Vajrayana practices as a whole aim towards "pure being", living in spontaneous, free, enlightened awareness. They provide methods to eradicate all the obstacles that prevent from "pure being" (ex: disturbing emotions, attachments, etc..).

In 1996, Jan spent nearly a full year residing in the Tibetan institute of Huy to intensify his study and his practice of shine, which gave him more stability of mind and more strength to handle his high sensitivity about perception of energy reality. Later and progressively he was exposed to more advanced practices.

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<sup>22</sup> Based on an interview with Jan.

<sup>23</sup> The specificities of Tantric Buddhist teachings are mainly: a) the cultivation of a long term spiritual relationship between student and teacher in order to promote direct transmission from person/consciousness/heart to person/consciousness/heart, b) the use of mantra, chanting, visualisation, control of the breath, archetype of forces and c) acknowledging the subtle energy reality (such as chakra and energy channels) and the non physical realities (such as bardos).

In parallel to Vajrayana training, Jan was invested in energy healing practices and gave his 1st teaching in 1998. As of 2000, when graduated from the Brennan School in the US, he started teaching more regularly and was asked to include mindfulness into certain trainings. Jan received permission from his teachers, lama Karta and lama Zeupa, to offer meditation classes, yet he only authorized himself to do so after 5000 hours of personal meditation practice<sup>24</sup>.

Brennan School studies brought Jan several additions to Vajrayana ones, mainly in terms of psychological and relational dynamics, psycho-energetics, subtle bodies, energy healing and body-mind psychotherapy.

In addition, Jan attended a training to become a facilitator in family constellation in 2005-2006.

The discovery of Non Violent Communication (from Marshall Rosenberg) in 2008 also influenced Jan's pedagogical approach significantly.

### Integral Presence origins

Based on his extensive and broad experience, Jan felt the need to develop an extended meditation method called Integral Presence to take into account the subtle realities of life and to serve a learning community around it.

Integral Presence is a way of developing consciousness and it finds its roots in Vajrayana, body-mind psychotherapy, family constellations, yoga practices and the Christian tradition.

Integral Presence "concept" gradually emerged in 2012 when Jan launched his own healing school in Brussels with the willingness to initiate students to the multidimensionality of human life. The concept was refined and developed over a period of 3 years and continues evolving.

Integral Presence now consists of 21 components, the first component being mindfulness. Mindfulness is the foundation on which all the other components can be built and which pervades all of them. Indeed a mindful presence is needed to perceive the energetic dimensions of our being (such as chakra, energy channels...). If the mindfulness element is neglected, the practice of the other components could be destabilizing and overwhelming. Nevertheless, with mindfulness only, the other elements of Integral Presence could fall into place unintentionally but without the same quality of understanding.

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*Mindfulness is one of the 3 foundations of Integral Presence, the two others being 'alignment' and 'breath'. As a foundation stone, Jan considers it necessary that it is recognized as such and that also that aspect of the practice remains in its true original form, which is in itself supported by several millennia old contemplative art traditions.*

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<sup>24</sup> By the time of the writing of this article (2019) the amount of Jan's meditation practice could easily add up to 20.000 hours through daily practice and retreats.

*Thousands of years of practice by millions of yogis, monks, nuns, laic people, spiritual masters and disciples has shaped and tested the solid essentials of mindfulness practice.*

*Even though Integral Presence offers a lot of additions to Mindfulness, like the 2 other foundations and the 12 additional elements of IP, it is always good to come back to the basics. In the best circumstances these additions increase the effectiveness of the path and can transform very specific obstacles. However, an excessive focus on the additional elements can create an imbalance in the practice. Therefore, it is always good to build up almost every Integral Presence exercise upon the 3 foundations and then highlight one or a few additional elements. Mindfulness supports all of the 14 other elements of Integral Presence and the 2 other foundational elements. Mindfulness, Alignment and Breath assure a safe balance and coherent integration of all the elements together.*

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The other 14 elements of Integral Presence are not developed here as they are already part of the curriculum of 'Energies Subtiles' training and 'Integral Presence' classes and trainings.

Thus Integral Presence encompasses and goes beyond mindfulness.

It is a living concept that is evolving along with the experience. It is a work in progress. Stay (at)tuned.

## Appendix : Shine & Lhaktong practices

The meditation of calm abiding directs mind towards one location, to calm it (Tib.: **Shine**, Skr.: Shamata). Consciousness is either directed at an item (e.g. a stone or a Buddha form) or it rests on the breath without a form. In this way, you abide in the „here and now“ of the present without intention. Thoughts may arise, but you do not follow them. If it happens nevertheless and you slide into past or future, you come back to the object of concentration in a relaxed manner. With the help of this practice mind is calmed. It becomes like the undisturbed surface of a lake, which mirrors everything clearly. This is connected with the experience of clarity and joy. Practice shows its effects in more surplus energy and ease and the growing capability of letting go of disturbing emotions in one’s own mind.

On the basis of Shine/Shamata arises insight meditation (Tib.: **Lhaktong**, Skr.: Vipassana). It is directed at recognizing the nature of one's own mind. When distracted, mind has no chance to look at itself. Just like the eye, mentioned in the above example, it sees everything that is experienced, without being able to see itself (ignorance). From the state of calm – not being distracted – it becomes possible to look at one’s own mind, the one who experiences. One can see how thoughts and feelings arise in the mind, play around and dissolve like waves in the sea without being a thing themselves. On the level of direct insight, mind shows its timeless nature, free of all dualistic concepts that separate one from the experience. From this perspective thoughts, feelings and sensory impressions are recognized as the free play of one’s own mind<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> [http://www.diamondway-buddhism-university.org/en/buddhism/Tibetan\\_Buddhist\\_Articles/meditation/meditaiton\\_experience.html](http://www.diamondway-buddhism-university.org/en/buddhism/Tibetan_Buddhist_Articles/meditation/meditaiton_experience.html)