

## Attitudes of Mindfulness

Jon Kabat-Zinn (Director of the Stress Reduction Clinic, University of Massachusetts) wrote about seven attitudes for developing mindfulness. You can see the full list and explanation in his book *Full Catastrophe Living* (first published in 1990 by Piatkus, pp 33-40). Below are attitudes that may be particularly helpful to consider when using mindfulness as part of your pain management kete.



**Non-judging.** Step back from judging what you are experiencing, and simply notice it. With regard to pain, this may be noticing sensations such as “sharp” or “dull”, rather than judgements about the pain being “awful”.

**Non-striving.** This emphasizes mindfulness as simply paying attention to whatever is happening, rather than aiming for a particular outcome. Trying to use mindfulness to change or eliminate pain creates a layer of pressure or tension to the exercise, and may lead to feelings of frustration or disappointment. Having a non-striving attitude removes those added burdens.



**Acceptance.** It may be helpful to think of this as “clear-seeing” or seeing things as they actually are in the present. Accepting things as they are means letting go of denial or resisting what is fact. This includes acknowledging the reality of pain when it is present. Acceptance allows us to choose how to respond to what is actually happening (not what we wish was or wasn’t happening).

**Letting go.** Allowing thoughts, sensations, emotions, and all that makes up our experience to come and go. Stepping back and allowing these natural shifts in awareness to occur, rather than trying to hold or avoid. This includes allowing noticing of pain sensations to ebb and flow without getting caught on trying to only hold on to pleasant sensations.

