

Letting Go Diary Card

The Letting Go Diary Card is a way for students of mindfulness to practice letting go, and to chart their progress as they gain these skills. The questions below on the Letting Go Worksheet outline the process of letting go, and help to clarify exactly what it is that needs to be let go. The process for using the questions and the Letting Go Diary Card is as follows:

1. Note the circumstance in which you needed to practice letting go on the card in the space provided.
2. Note, on a scale of 1 to 10, how successful you are at letting go before reading the questions and practicing a mindful meditation.
3. Read and answer the questions below on the Letting Go Worksheet, then practice a brief mindful meditation.
4. Now rate your success, on a scale of 1 to 10, at letting go after answering the questions and doing the meditation.

There are seven spaces on the Diary Card: one for each day of the week. It may help to do at least one exercise a day for several weeks so that you may chart your progress with Letting Go. Just remember not to get caught up in trying to do things the “right” way. There is no right or wrong way to do the Letting Go Diary Card. It is simply a tool to help you gain experience with letting go.

Worksheet 01.12.01 Letting Go

This *Letting Go Worksheet* is used in conjunction with the *Letting Go Diary Card*. Before using the Diary Card, it is often helpful to know exactly what it is that you need to let go of.

Imagine that you are trying to get to a friend's house, and you've never been there before. You ask your friend where his house is, and he responds, "In the United States." Obviously, that's not enough information to be able to find his house. He'd have to get more specific.

Letting go is like that. The more specific you can be about what it is you need to let go of, the more successful you will be. In fact, simply completing this exercise below may be enough to enable you to let go of the problem. Just remember to be as specific as possible when answering these six questions. If you are completing this workbook for the Mindfulness: An Introduction course through the Mindful Ecotherapy Center at www.mindfulecotherapy.com there is no need to write down your answers to this worksheet. You'd only need to complete the Letting Go Diary Card that follows. Complete at least one week's worth of exercises on the Diary Card.

1. Who is involved in the problem?

- a. Is the problem about another individual, or is it about me?
- b. If it's about another individual, is there something I can do to change the problem (remember, you can't change other people's behavior, you can only change your own)?
- c. If the problem is about me, is it something I can change?
- d. If it's something I can't change, is it something I can accept?
- e. If I can't accept it about myself, why not?

2. What is the nature of the problem?

- a. Specifically, what worries me about this event/situation?
- b. Is it something that is within my power to change?
- c. If it's in my power to change, what steps do I need to take in order to change it?
- d. If it's beyond my power to change, what steps do I need to take in order to accept it?
- e. What's the worst thing that can happen in this situation?

3. When is this problem likely to happen?

- a. Am I worried about something that happened in the past?
- b. If it's in the past, the past is over and done with. Why am I worrying about it now?
- c. Is it something that may happen in the future?
- d. If it may happen in the future, have I done all I can to prevent it from happening?
- e. If I've done all I can to prevent it, why am I still concerned about it (be specific)?

4. Where is the problem likely to happen?

- a. Is this problem associated with a certain place?
- b. Is this a place that I can avoid going to?
- c. If it's not a place I can avoid going to, is there something I can change about the situation?
- d. If there's nothing I can change about the situation, what would I need to change about myself in order to accept the situation?

5. How likely is this problem to occur?

- a. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 = “no anxiety at all” and 10 = “maximum anxiety,” how worried am I about the problem?
- b. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 = “no chance at all” and 10 = “will definitely happen,” how likely is it that this problem will happen?
- c. If the rating from “a” is greater than the rating from “b,” am I needlessly worrying about a situation that isn’t likely to happen?

6. Why is this a problem?

- a. Being as specific as possible, why does this problem worry you?
- b. What would need to change in order for you to worry less about the problem?
- c. Is the answer in “b” something you have the power to change?
- d. If not, what would have to change in your thinking in order for you to be able to accept the problem?

Once you have answered all the questions above, write the specific nature of the problem in the column labeled “CIRCUMSTANCE IN WHICH YOU NEED TO PRACTICE ‘LETTING GO’ on the *Letting Go Diary Card* below. When describing the problem on the Diary Card, remember to be as specific as possible. For example, instead of writing, “I’m worried about money problems,” write something like, “I’m worried about making the house payment,” etc. in the space. Try to keep the problem focused on things you have the power to change. If it’s something you don’t have the power to change, try to focus on what you would have to change about your thinking in order for you to accept the problem ‘as is.’

After writing the specific nature of the problem on the Diary Card, rate your success on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 = “no trouble at all letting go of this problem,” and 10 = “I simply cannot let go of this problem, no matter what.”

After rating your success, practice the mindful breathing exercise below. Try mindful breathing for at least ten minutes, but if that is not possible, do as much as you can. The amount of time isn’t as important as the exercise itself. After practicing mindful breathing, rate your “letting go” score again, using the same scale as above. Did the number change?

As you become more adept with different mindfulness techniques, you may want to experiment with them to see which ones help you the most in “letting go.” Keep your Diary Cards in a notebook so you can chart your progress as your skills grow.

If you ever get stuck, keep this worksheet handy so you may refer to it again as needed.

Worksheet 01.12.02 Mindful Breathing

The Mindful Breathing Exercise may be used any time you are feeling emotionally overwhelmed, stressed out, or depressed and in need of “letting go.”

It is three simple steps, outlined below. You don't have to do it for exactly ten minutes. You just do it for as long as is necessary. The answer to the question, “How long does it take?” is “as long as it takes.”

STEP ONE

Focus on your breathing. Place one hand on your chest, and another over your navel. When breathing in and out, the hand over your navel should move up and down, while the hand over your chest should not move. Make the exhalation longer than the inhalation, and breathe deeply into your abdomen, from the diaphragm. Feel all the sensations of your breath as it enters and leaves your body. Can you feel each individual muscle in your abdomen as you breathe in and out? Can you feel your nostrils flare with each breath? Can you sense the air being warmed by your body as you breathe?

STEP TWO

Leave Doing Mode and enter Being Mode. In Being Mode, you are not trying to go anywhere or do anything. You are simply ‘being.’ Note that if you engage in Mindful Breathing with the goal of ‘trying to relax’ or ‘trying to calm down,’ that ‘trying’ is ‘doing,’ and you are not doing. Your goal is to ‘be,’ not to ‘do.’

STEP THREE

Leave Thinking Mode and enter Sensing Mode. This doesn't mean that you're ‘trying’ to stop thinking. Remember, ‘trying’ is ‘doing!’ You're just refocusing your attention and concentration from your thinking to your senses. You are paying attention to what your senses are telling you. What are you seeing right now? What do you hear? Are there any scents where you are? Tastes? How does your body interact with this environment?

That's it! Just use these three simple steps whenever you need a break from thinking or feeling or when your emotions overwhelm you. If it seems difficult to do at first, that's okay. It's a skill like any other. It becomes easier with practice. If it were easy the first time, you'd already be doing it!

Worksheet 01.12.03 Letting Go Diary Card

Name: _____ Date: _____

The purpose of this journal is to chart your progress with practicing the art of “letting go.” Keep these diary cards as a way of marking your progress. Over time, you should see steady improvement in your “letting go” skills.

To use this chart:

1. Record the date, then the circumstance in which you felt the need to “let go.”
2. Write down your estimate of how well you could let go before practicing mindfulness. Rate your success on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 = “not very well at all” to 10=“I was able to completely let go.”
3. Practice a mindfulness meditation exercise for 5-10 minutes or do the Letting Go Worksheet
4. Record your estimate of letting go again, on a scale of 1 to 10, after completing the meditation/doing the worksheet.
5. Compare the results. If you are completing this for course credit with the Mindful Ecotherapy Center (www.mindfulecotherapy.com), return this completed Diary Card with the rest of your worksheet materials.

DATE	CIRCUMSTANCE IN WHICH YOU NEEDED TO PRACTICE LETTING GO	SUCCESS BEFORE	SUCCESS AFTER	NOTE ANY THOUGHTS, FEELINGS OR INSIGHTS ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE
MONDAY				
TUESDAY				
WEDNESDAY				
THURSDAY				
FRIDAY				
SATURDAY				
SUNDAY				