AWARENESS OF SURROUNDINGS AND SENSES

Spacious awareness is an awareness of what is literally in your space. A person who is mindful can become more spaciously aware of, for example, their surroundings—what is in front of or behind them. Additionally, someone can become more aware of their surroundings through utilizing their senses—sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing. Once someone becomes aware of their space and surroundings moment by moment, the decision is to then decide where to put their attention.

Directed awareness is choosing where to focus one’s attention. Does someone focus on the big picture, the entire landscape, or on one piece of the picture? This is where spacious awareness shifts into a more directed awareness. Someone takes what they see, for example, and decides where they want to put their attention and focus. If you use seeing a garden as an example, you can focus in on the entire garden, then focus in on one rosebush, and then further focus in on the bush with one or two more heightened senses. How does it smell? What do the thorns feel like?

AWARENESS OF THE MIND: THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

This awareness is not only applied to one’s surroundings and senses but can also be applied to the mind. In the beginning sessions, MBSR-T seeks to teach teens to become more spaciously aware of their world, surroundings, and senses. Teens can then apply this spacious awareness to their mind—both their thoughts and feelings. Mindfulness can be a spacious awareness of one’s stream of consciousness without trying to influence it in some way. Mindfulness can also be more directed and influenced—not to just be with the mind, but to decide to work with one’s mind. Someone can use wise effort to decide where to put their attention. It is being aware of the contents of your consciousness, moment by moment, and then deciding to stay with what you have become aware of or to shift your attention to another thought or feeling. Doing this gives a person more of a sense of agency and control of their moment-to-moment experiences.

Through the MBSR-T sessions, teens learn skills that can assist them in this process of learning both spacious and directed awareness as it applies to their surroundings, senses, and mind.