



The Finger Continues to Point to the Moon

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Mindfulness: A Finger Pointing to the Moon—this was the title of the editorial that inaugurated the very first issue of *Mindfulness* (Singh, 2010). The Founding Editor-in-Chief, Nirbhay Singh, chose a reference to this gesture attributed to Huìnéng, the Sixth Patriarch of Chán Buddhism, to signal the intention he had for this journal. Disseminating robust scientific findings and theoretical debate about mindfulness is not mindfulness itself. The journal can thus provide a forum to *point* to mindfulness, which is something that readers are encouraged to experience themselves.

Thirteen years and around 2000 articles later, *Mindfulness* has grown according to the vision of the Founding Editor-in-Chief: The journal has developed into the flagship journal for the now well-established field of mindfulness research while maintaining its role in encouraging active personal practice through publishing practice-related contributions. With this journal, Nirbhay Singh has successfully gathered a vibrant community of researchers, scholars, and practitioners who actively participate in furthering our understanding of mindfulness and related phenomena. He has inspired many individuals to contribute to the journal and its community as authors, reviewers, Members of the Editorial Board, Guest Editors, and Associate Editors. For so many people, Nirb—as he is often known as—has been a generous mentor who embodies how a mindfulness journal should be run: with awareness, kindness, patience, and selflessness.

Even though it is our intention to continue the path that has been laid out for the journal by the Founding Editor-in-Chief and the many contributors, there will inevitably be some changes as mindfulness research matures further

and starts to play a wider range of roles within societies around the world. We may not be as apt as Nirbhay Singh in noticing or predicting trends in mindfulness research and thought, but we are determined to listen to the community and respond accordingly. Coming from a robust literature base on mindfulness-based interventions (for a review, see Krägeloh et al., 2019) and equipped with a diverse arsenal of mindfulness measures (Medvedev et al., 2022), mindfulness research and related debate have already expanded to topics of broader relevance, such as mindful parenting, terror of mortality, sustainability, and racism.

Nirbhay Singh, in his keynote presentation at the International Conference on Mindfulness – Asia Pacific in 2022, quoted Nobel Prize Scientist Sir Peter Medawar: “It can be said with complete confidence that any scientist of any age *who wants to make important discoveries must study important problems*. Dull or piffing problems yield dull or piffing answers” (Medawar, 1979, p.13, italics in original). This is an important point to consider for future mindfulness research, given the current world crises such as pandemic, war, and other environmental, social, and economic challenges. This means we will be less interested in studies that are simply trying to find and fill “a gap in the literature” and more in those focusing on relevant and timely issues and research questions. On the same note, mindfulness research should not be exclusively “applied,” and “blue skies” research focused on knowledge and understanding of mindfulness and its related mechanisms is very welcome as it ultimately informs applied research.

While we will closely follow developments in the field and adapt accordingly, a premier journal such as *Mindfulness* is also a vehicle to *effect* change, such as through promoting suitable quality standards. During our time as Associate Editors for *Mindfulness*, we already witnessed substantial developments such as a move towards increased transparency through study preregistration and data sharing. Associate Editors and reviewers are aware that we are currently in a transition period, but authors are increasingly being asked to provide all the necessary information about those aspects. Authors are also asked to be more precise in

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the description of their chosen research design, which needs to be supported by adequate definitions or references to the literature. Common feedback for authors, for example, has been to position their study clearly as either a pilot study or a feasibility study and not to use these terms interchangeably. Although cross-sectional studies play an important role within the repertoire of research designs, reviewers and Associate Editors of *Mindfulness* regularly stress the need for such studies to compensate for their lack of ability to permit causal inferences. For these kinds of studies, novel contributions may be achieved through the exploration of mindfulness in new population groups, improving methods or psychometric properties of self-report instruments, or advancing a particular theoretical model. Studies we receive with convenience samples of university students or samples recruited from online recruitment services often do not meet these criteria.

Regular readers of the journal would have also noticed certain shifts in content and style of communication over the years. Now that the field of mindfulness research can boast a sizeable literature, it is becoming increasingly superfluous to review some of the historical origins of modern mindfulness research, particularly for a specialist journal such as *Mindfulness*. Where sufficiently detailed background is crucial, however, is when authors present the context within which their particular research question emerged. Here, it is important to ensure that a suitable definition of mindfulness is chosen, that this definition matches the chosen measure(s), and that findings are carefully linked to the relevant literature. Similarly, different conceptualizations of mindfulness (e.g., as a state, trait, skill, or technique) must not be conflated. Interpretation of one's findings in relation to other literature needs to proceed carefully as one cannot assume that findings from another study are relevant to one's own simply because they use the same term *mindfulness*. In the same way, findings from very brief mindfulness exercises cannot be generalized to those from mindfulness-based interventions or even more long-term practice experience such as spiritual or religious mindfulness practice.

There will be many areas where the journal will evolve continuously. Some types of changes can already be clearly anticipated such as the publisher rolling out a new submission platform to which this journal will also move. Coinciding with this, there will be some changes regarding the article submission types. The journal will no longer publish book reviews, apart from those that have already been submitted, accepted, or are in press. Some of the submission categories will also likely change, although some of this will only be in terms of the labels used to designate the various forms of journal contributions. Overall, we encourage concise communication, which means that manuscripts reporting on validation of translated scales, for example,

could be of reduced length, as long as the above-mentioned criteria regarding methodological and theoretical details are fulfilled. Apart from empirical research and review articles, we continue to be interested in theoretical work, reflections on mindfulness practice, and healthy academic debate. The journal has periodically published guest-edited Special Issues and Special Sections by invitation of the Editor-in-Chief and we will continue this practice. Therefore, authors thinking about putting together a Special Issue or Special Section must consult with the Editor-in-Chief for approval, while all such submissions will undergo the usual rigorous editorial process like all other submissions. More detailed information will be available in due course, and authors are also encouraged to consult with us when planning to submit non-empirical manuscripts to *Mindfulness*, which we intend to publish under the category name *Perspective*.

In the present issue, readers will find a reflection by Jon Kabat-Zinn (2023) about Nirbhay Singh's journey with the journal—something we would never have been able to convey so elegantly and for which we are very grateful. We agree that it is very difficult to overstate Nirb's contributions to the field of mindfulness research. We feel honored, humbled, and privileged to take over the helm of this wonderful journal and look forward to working with so many passionate and dedicated colleagues who contribute their time and expertise as reviewers, Members of the Editorial Board, Guest Editors, and Associate Editors. It is only through this community that the journal will be able to continue its stellar trajectory as a forum for dissemination of mindfulness theory, research, and practice. Connecting back to the original founding vision of *Mindfulness*, we are thus determined to ensure that the finger continues to point to the moon—just like it always did since the launch of the journal.

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