

# The Crazy Wisdom Calendar



**Psychotherapist Lynn Sipher**

“Mindfulness cultivates a non-adversarial relationship to symptoms.”

## *Falling Awake: Mindfulness for Depression and Anxiety*

**Bill Zirinsky:** Lynn, you’ve been teaching a class called *Falling Awake: Mindfulness for Depression and Anxiety*. Tell us about it.

**Lynn Sipher:** The class is centered around the idea that we are often living on automatic pilot: our minds in one place, our bodies in another. Autopilot is what happens when we hear a person’s name one minute and can’t remember it the next or when we have just finished eating a snack and don’t remember eating. In *Falling Awake* classes, people living with depression and anxiety are learning to become more aware of their moment-to-moment experience without judging it. Many people who live with anxiety and depression believe they are only too aware of these states. What they discover, however, is that these states actually creep in subtly when they are on autopilot; when they aren’t paying attention. Once people have awareness that anxiety and depression are present, this approach helps them create a space to decide what they are going to do next. *Falling Awake* is built on two therapeutic approaches: Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy for Depression (MBCT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT).

**BZ:** Are your classes for people in the midst of a depressive episode? And are your classes group therapy?

**Lynn Sipher:** People in the midst of a depressive episode will probably not have the mental energy or motivation to practice sitting meditation and other exercises that help build awareness. The class is designed for people who are feeling better than they once were after an episode of depression and want to build skills to prevent another possible episode. Unless someone is too anxious to be in class, most anyone with anxiety can benefit. The classes are educational and practical in nature. I teach formal and informal skills of mindfulness. *Falling Awake* is not a substitute for individual therapy nor is it group therapy.

**You mentioned to me that in your classes, you are encouraging people to not cultivate meanness toward their anxiety and depression, and to notice their experiences and be curious about them. Can you elaborate on that, and in doing so, share with us the essence of what you are trying to offer people who come to your 8-week class on *Mindfulness for Depression and Anxiety*?**

**Sipher:** What I invite in *Falling Awake* is a kind, compassionate, patient, and accepting approach to what is happening inside of us; what is already there. It only makes things worse if we are feeling lousy and then beat ourselves up about it; or think we shouldn’t be experiencing what we are experiencing. Mindfulness cultivates a non-adversarial relationship to symptoms. If a symptom is there, we might allow it to come and go. We may learn, for example, to become curious about the ways the intensity changes or become aware of the ways it manifests in our bodies. It seems the more present and aware we are as we go through unpleasant experiences, the less “hold” they have on us. It’s a radical idea. Try it with an itch sometime. Using mindfulness, you can actually ride the waves of an itch without scratching it.

**You mentioned to me that people who suffer from depression are living with a chronic condition, and that “people are often fused with their depression.” What do you mean by that, and what kind of exercises might you do, in the class, related to that insight?**

**Sipher:** People living with anxiety and depression often identify with these conditions as if it is all of who they are. “I am depressed.” “I have anxiety.” One exercise that helps separate them from identifying so closely with these conditions is being able to name the specific thoughts that are associated with them. “I’m a failure” and “I’m weak” are common for depression. “I can’t handle it” and “What if...?” are common for anxiety. Stepping back from these sweeping thoughts and recognizing them as simple mental events, not facts, is a practice that gives thoughts less power.

**Do people in the class learn to meditate? And, if so, what kind of meditation?**

**Sipher:** People in the class learn mindfulness meditation approaches every week. Mindfulness meditation is likened to a searchlight, illuminating what is in the field of awareness. Thoughts, feelings, body sensations, impulses and urges, and memories may arise. Our task is to notice what’s in the field and gently bring ourselves back to the vehicle for meditation, which is often the breath.

**Is it satisfying for you to be working with depression and anxiety in this manner?**

**Sipher:** I love teaching this class! I love witnessing people waking up to a different relationship with depression and anxiety. It’s great to watch the unfolding understanding that depression and anxiety are simply aspects of the internal landscape at any given moment. They can live their lives fully, according to what they value, even if anxiety and depression are present. I am observing people becoming less oppressed by these conditions. It is an honor and privilege and, actually, a bit of a thrill to witness these kinds of shifts.

**I know you were recently at a weeklong training on this subject. Please tell us a bit about that.**

**Sipher:** The training was designed for mental health professionals interested in learning how to teach MBCT. There was an emphasis on facilitators having a personal mindfulness practice. We spent many hours in silence: meditating, mindful movement and even eating. Between periods of silence, the teaching/training happened. Over the last day and a half, we taught each other. We had the support and supervision of the three trainers, one of whom was Zindel Segal, Ph.D. -- a researcher and author of MBCT.

**Can you elaborate on the distinction between a mindfully informed therapy practice, and mindfulness-based psychotherapy?**

**Sipher:** In a mindfully informed practice, therapists have their own mindfulness practices and often read literature on mindfulness and psychotherapy. The knowledge from those activities informs their work. Clients would not necessarily realize this influence any more than other

### 3 Books on Mindful Approaches to Anxiety and Depression

*The Mindful Way through Depression* by Williams, Teasdale, Segal and Kabat-Zinn. This book includes a CD with meditations by Kabat-Zinn.

*Full Catastrophe Living* by Jon Kabat-Zinn. The original book on mindfulness-based stress reduction.

*Calming Your Anxious Mind* by Jeffery Brantley. A mindful approach to anxiety.

*(These books are available at Crazy Wisdom.)*



“I love witnessing people waking up to a different relationship with depression and anxiety.”

Lynn Sipher’s *Falling Awake* class will next be offered starting on September 30<sup>th</sup>.

influences unless they asked specifically. In mindfulness-based psychotherapy, therapists are teaching specific mindfulness skills (such as sitting meditation) during sessions.

#### How long have you been meditating?

**Sipher:** *Since 2001.*

#### How has a regular meditation practice changed your own daily life, and how has it affected or deepened your life overall?

**Sipher:** I find that I am less reactive to life’s inevitable difficulties. When unpleasant events arise, I am more accepting of the way things are in the moment and paying more attention to my internal responses. I am able to more calmly think through my choices. One of these choices may be to focus on the breath, which creates a little more space for the mind and body to tap into the wisdom inherently there.

#### What do you most love about Ann Arbor in the springtime?

**Sipher:** I look forward to getting back to the Farmer’s Market after winter hibernation. I enjoy seeing the growers with their newly budding plants and the possibilities they represent. I love supporting local vendors. Sometimes I just go for a sensory massage: colors, textures, and smells. It’s also fun bumping into people I know. I appreciate being part of this community.

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(Lynn Sipher, LMSW can be reached at 734-332-3365 or [www.lynnipher.com](http://www.lynnipher.com))

If you are interested in obtaining some biographical information about the teachers, lecturers, and workshop leaders whose classes, talks and events are listed in this Calendar, please look in the section which follows the Calendar, which is called “Background Information” and which starts on page 90.

## Bodywork

**Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement Classes with Joanna Myers • Mondays, 7-8 p.m. and Wednesdays, Noon-1 p.m.** • Join our ongoing Awareness Through Movement Class and relieve pain, reduce stress, and vastly improve your coordination and comfort level. Feldenkrais Lessons retrain the brain and body through gentle movement and attention, done at your own pace. \$90 for six class series or \$20 drop in. Call 395-8486; [joanna@feldannarbor.net](mailto:joanna@feldannarbor.net) or [feldannarbor.net](http://feldannarbor.net).

**Protect Your Health and Release Stress with Alexander Technique with Alice Greminger • First, Third, and Fourth Wednesdays of each month; 7 p.m.** • Just as Alexander Technique helps performers and athletes overcome performance anxiety and mental/physical blocks to excellence, it also helps all of us destress and function at our highest level. Learn how to use your body’s design for free, effortless movement in all your activities. No class Aug. 18. \$15. Call 665-0849, [agreminger1@gmail.com](mailto:agreminger1@gmail.com) or [agreminger.musicteachershelper.com](http://agreminger.musicteachershelper.com).

**Improve Your Movement, Renew Yourself with Alexander Technique with Alice Greminger • May 12 or June 9, 7-9 p.m.** • Experience how Alexander Technique releases old tensions, giving new energy to you and all your activities, from quiet activities such as computer work and walking, to complex activities such as sports and performing. Alexander Technique helps with injury recovery and prevention and, as a person becomes freer physically, personal well being and creativity are enhanced. \$30. Call 665-0849, [agreminger1@gmail.com](mailto:agreminger1@gmail.com) or [agreminger.musicteachershelper.com](http://agreminger.musicteachershelper.com).

**Feldenkrais Method Awareness Through Movement Group Class with Dale Jensen • Tuesdays, 9:30-10:30 a.m. and Wednesdays, Noon-1 p.m.** • Rediscover your ability to move with ease, comfort, and coordination in this ongoing group Feldenkrais class. Themes include improving posture, reducing back pain, reducing shoulder and neck tension, relaxation, improving walking, running, and other athletic pursuits, breathing, recovering from injury, and more. Class is different each week. Join anytime. \$15 drop in or five for \$60. Call 646-9368; [dale@mindbodymove.com](mailto:dale@mindbodymove.com) or [mindbodymove.com](http://mindbodymove.com).

**BodyTalk Access with Mary Shields • May 1, 10 a.m.-6:30 p.m.** • BodyTalk Access provides the layperson, family, and community with a simple set of energy-based techniques to make health maintenance and the management of daily health challenges accessible. A majority of day-to-day health and stress-related concerns can very easily be addressed with the BodyTalk Access routine, when done on a regular basis. \$125. Call Jackie Kilburn at 810-231-9042; [jumpin@chartermi.net](mailto:jumpin@chartermi.net) or [bodytalk-system.com](http://bodytalk-system.com).

**Back Care for People in Pain: Put the Spring Back in Your Spine with Judith Stern • June 19, 1:30-3 p.m.** • This free workshop will teach basic self-care principles for managing and preventing chronic back pain. Participants will have the opportunity to experience hands-on Alexander Technique instruction. Free with preregistration necessary. Held at Education Center at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital. Call 761-2135; [jheirich@umich.edu](mailto:jheirich@umich.edu) or <http://altMD.com/specialists/Judith-Stern>.

**Cranialsacral Therapy for Children with Linda Diane Feldt • May 5 and June 30, 10-11:30 a.m.** • This is one of two continuing classes you can take to build on a basic understanding of infant massage, the other being Polarity Therapy and Energy Techniques. \$15-\$20 sliding scale. Call Indigo Forest at 994-8010; [Beth@VisitIndigo.com](mailto:Beth@VisitIndigo.com).

## Book Discussion Groups

**Crazy Wisdom Bookstore Monthly Book Discussion • 7 p.m. at Crazy Wisdom Community Room** • Join our monthly book discussion group. Each month, a different book is chosen for reading and discussion. Purchase the book in advance for the discussion group and receive 30% off purchase of the current month’s title. It is recommended to read the book before meeting. All are welcome; just show up! (Authors absent from events.) Call 665-2757, [information@crazywisdom.net](mailto:information@crazywisdom.net).

**May 14 • *When Fear Falls Away: The Story of a Sudden Awakening* by Jan Frazier**

**June 11 • *Inflammation Syndrome: Your Nutrition Plan for Great Health* by Jack Challem**

**July 23 • *The Plan: Big Ideas for Change in America* by Rahm Emanuel**

**Aug. 13 • *Your Right to Know: Genetic Engineering and the Secret Changes in Your Food* by Andrew Kimbrell Center**

**Jewel Heart Readers • May 11, June 8, Aug. 10; 7-8:30 p.m.** • Enjoy lively discussion on monthly dharma-related book selections with fellow sangha. Free with donations welcome. Call 994-3387; [programs@jewelheart.org](mailto:programs@jewelheart.org) or [jewelheart.org](http://jewelheart.org).

**Book Study: *Esoteric Buddhism* by A.P. Sinnett with Marina Sionov • Second Monday of each month, 7 p.m.** • This theosophical classic constitutes one of the earliest explorations of karma and reincarnation and other terms previously almost unknown in the West. We are a small group of serious minded students dedicated to the pursuit of an indepth understanding of the great teachings. Free. Call Lotus Page at 313-640-8449; [lotus711@yahoo.com](mailto:lotus711@yahoo.com) or <http://tsdetroit.org>.