

## Week 40 Practice

Perhaps I've already spoiled this week's exercise for you by telling you about it, but let's try it anyway. Begin by coming to mindfulness, which is to say, getting comfortable in a quiet place without interruptions, breathing naturally, slowly bringing your attention to the breath, becoming mindful of each moment in which your attention wanders from your breath, and then gently returning your attention to the breath. Put this book down until you have settled into the rhythm of this. Then move slowly through this exercise.

First, begin to visualize a filing cabinet. Picture the material it is made of, the color, the nicks and scratches, the handles. Now, pull out a drawer. Notice a file for every year of your life. Picture the numbers. Slowly flip through them until you find the current year. Open it. Envision within it a scene that captures a disappointing rut you find yourself in during your day to day life. See the ways it keeps you safe. See the ways it keeps you imprisoned.

Now close the file, replace it, and move forward five years. Repeat the exercise. Now move forward ten years. Repeat. Twenty years. Repeat. Close the drawer. Now feel the hopelessness of never changing that disappointing habit, pattern, or routine. Feel the hopelessness of never really living what you want to live in your numbered days and years. Let your hopelessness agitate you. In chemistry, to agitate means to stir up or arouse. Let your hopelessness stir things up.

Let it arouse you.

Now, open the drawer again. Flip through the files to the year five years from now. Open it. Envision within it a scene in which you are living what you want to live with your life. You won't get there by hoping for it, only by *doing* it. Give yourself time for this exercise. *Feel* it. Though last week you began to question the schemas that keep you tethered to old ways of living, it is likely you will need a little more motivation than that. Hopelessness is a crummy feeling.

Erasing it is usually pretty good motivation.