



Starting a Search Inside Yourself Book Club

Welcome!

You're about to start a book club that will hopefully be an enjoyable and bonding group experience while also being an introduction to mindfulness and emotional intelligence. Search Inside Yourself (SIY) was developed at Google as a way to help Google engineers cultivate mindfulness and emotional intelligence. Chade-Meng Tan (known as Meng, Google employee #107) started the SIY program at Google, and then wrote the book, *Search Inside Yourself: The Unexpected Path to Achieving Success, Happiness (and World Peace)*, to share the practices outside of Google. The book combines accessible information about mindfulness, emotional intelligence and the scientific research behind these concepts with practice exercises (and cartoons!).

Readers can expect to learn why mindfulness is an important skill and how it's the basis for emotional intelligence—tools to help improve focus, manage stress, connect with others and be happier. These guidelines are intended to help make it easy for you to organize a group to read and discuss *Search Inside Yourself* (by Chade-Meng Tan). Please use these guidelines as loose suggestions and tailor them to your group's desires and interests.

How does the book compare to the [Search Inside Yourself program](#)? While the curriculum covers the same topics, the SIY program is a deeper way of engaging with the content. In the program, we make the learning experience highly interactive with many exercises to provide participants with opportunities to practice mindfulness, reflect on their tendencies and values, and cultivate ways to connect authentically with others.

Suggested Book Club Format

We've found that an SIY book club works well when a committed group of approximately five to 15 people meet weekly to discuss about one chapter (20 to 30 pages) each week.

- Book: *Search Inside Yourself* by Chade-Meng Tan, 240 pages
- Time: eight sessions of 1 to 2 hours
- Frequency: once per week
- Group size: 5 to 15 people
- Who: friends, coworkers, family, community members, anyone! See the sample invitation language on the next page to spread the word.

Below you'll find suggestions for what chapters to read for each gathering and suggested discussion questions and exercises, as well as a sample email invitation and resources for guided meditations.

For each meeting, we suggest the following agenda:

Topic	Description	Time
Mindfulness Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start each meeting with a mindfulness practice: for example, 2 minutes of silence or a guided meditation. (See below.)• As the book club continues, you can lengthen the length of the mindfulness practice, perhaps starting with 2 minutes and working up to 10 minutes.	2 to 10 minutes
Check-Ins	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple: Everyone says one word about how they are doing in that moment.• Longer: Intention for the session or 1 minute of what's on your mind/what has your attention.	1 to 2 minutes per person, approximately 10 to 15 minutes total
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open discussion on the week's reading.• You can facilitate the conversation with the discussion prompts listed.	30 minutes to 1 hour
Practice Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try what you're reading about! You can use the suggestions below for exercises. Practice as a group, or use get creative based on what you read.	10 to 20 minutes
Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give each person a chance to share a closing takeaway (for example, what do you want to remember from this chapter?). These responses can be as long as 1 minute each or as short as one word.• Confirm the date, time and location of the next meeting.	5 to 10 minutes

Guided Meditations

SIYLI has a number of [free guided meditations at siyli.org](https://siyli.org).

There are also a number of great apps with guided meditations you can use for the group and for your own use, such as:

- [Insight Timer](#)
- [Headspace](#)
- [Buddhify](#)
- [Simple Habit](#)

Mindful Reading

Before you begin reading Search Inside Yourself, we encourage your entire group to become familiar with [how to be mindful while reading](#).

Sample Invitation Template

Dear friends,

Would you like to learn more about how to be happy and successful? I'm starting a book club to read *Search Inside Yourself: The Unexpected Path to Achieving Success, Happiness (and World Peace)*, by Chade-Meng Tan. Meng was employee # 107 at Google and created Search Inside Yourself to share mindfulness practices with his colleagues. The book combines accessible information about mindfulness, emotional intelligence and the scientific research behind these concepts with practice exercises.

I'm excited to read the book and form a group to discuss it because *[include something personal about why are you excited to share this]*.

To summarize:

- Book: *Search Inside Yourself* by Chade-Meng Tan (approximately 240 pages), reading one chapter each week.
- Meetings: weekly for eight sessions of 1 to 2 hours each. It will be a combination of discussion and practicing some of the exercises from the book.
- Time and location: *[fill in]*
- *[Any other details to share?]*

Interested? Let me know by *[date]* if you want to join me to test out how mindfulness can support each of us. Also, please let me know if you know anyone else who might want to join!

Session 1: Introduction to the Group and to Emotional Intelligence

Reading: Introduction & Chapter 1

Note: The forwards and introduction are a great way to understand more about the origin of Search Inside Yourself at Google. These are optional; you can skip straight to Chapter 1.

Mindfulness Practice

Set a timer for 2 minutes and simply sit in silence together. You don't need to do anything special, just notice what thoughts and feelings arise. As Meng suggests, you can practice what he calls the "Easy Way" (bringing your attention gently to your breath) or the "Easier Way" (shifting from doing to being).

Check-Ins

Everyone says one word about how they are doing in that moment, sets an intention for the session or takes 1 minute to share what's on their mind/what has their attention.

Discussion Questions

- What attracted you to read this book?
- What struck you about the description of emotional intelligence and its domains (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills)? Can you think of someone in your life who demonstrates any of these skills especially well?
- What aspects of emotional intelligence might be your strongest? Are there some areas you might want to work on?
- What connections do you see between mindfulness and self-awareness with emotional intelligence?
- What do you hope to gain, or more deeply understand, from reading the book and participating in this group? (Optional: Write down your answer to this question and keep it to revisit during the final session.)
- What ideas, preconceptions or experiences do you have in regard to mindfulness or meditation?

Practice Exercise: Play with the Easy Way and the Easier Way

- First, set a timer for 2 to 5 minutes and practice the "Easy Way". Then, do it again and practice the "Easier Way".
- What differences did you notice? What thoughts and feelings arose? What happened when you noticed that you were distracted?

Closing

Give each person a chance to share a closing takeaway (for example, what do you want to remember from this chapter?). These responses can be as long as 1 minute each or as short as one word. Confirm the date, time and location of the next meeting.

Session 2: Mindfulness & Starting a Meditation Practice

Reading: Chapters 2 and 3

Mindfulness Practice

Set a timer for 3 minutes, and bring your attention gently to your breath. Each time you notice that your mind has wandered, simply return to the sensation of breathing.

Check-Ins

Everyone says one word about how they are doing in that moment, sets an intention for the session or takes 1 minute to share what's on their mind/what has their attention.

Discussion Questions

- Meng says that there is no bad meditation. What does this mean? When you're meditating, is there a part of you that feels like you're doing it wrong?
- Chapter 2 describes some benefits of meditation that have been shown through research (happiness, accelerated healing, enhanced brain function, among others). How do you imagine mindfulness and meditation can support you generally and help you develop greater emotional intelligence?
- How does mindfulness support better listening skills? When in your life might mindful listening or mindful conversation be useful and/or enjoyable?
- In practicing mindfulness by focusing on your breath, what do you find most challenging and most beneficial?
- Based on your experience so far, and Meng's description of the benefits of mindfulness practice, do you want to start a daily practice (or build on a practice you already have)? If so, what do you want your practice to look like? (Get specific: When will you practice? Where? For how long in the beginning? What will you do?) Meng lists a few suggestions for building this habit, such as find a buddy, do less than you can, take one breath a day. Which of these might help you?
- Meng describes "Joyful Mindfulness" as bringing your full attention to a joyful experience, such as taking a walk, enjoying a meal or being with a loved one. How does mindfulness enhance these moments? How might you bring mindful attention to the pleasant moments in your life?

Practice Exercise: Walking Meditation and/or Mindful Listening/ Conversation

- Use the description in Chapter 3 about walking meditation and try it as a group.
- Use the instructions in Chapter 3 for mindful listening or mindful conversation and divide into pairs. First, have one person speak, while the other listens. Set a timer for 3 minutes and let people know when to switch speakers and listeners. As a group, talk about how this experience was, both as a listener and a speaker.

Closing

Give each person a chance to share a closing takeaway (for example, what do you want to remember from this chapter?). These responses can be as long as 1 minute each or as short as one word. Confirm the date, time and location of the next meeting.

Session 3: Cultivating Self-Awareness

Reading: Chapter 4

Note: Everyone will need a pen and paper (or notebook) this session if you plan to do the practice exercise: journaling for self-assessment.

Mindfulness Practice

Try 4 minutes of mindfulness practice. You might try the meditation circuit training described in Chapter 3 or the body scan described in Chapter 4.

Check-Ins

Everyone says one word about how they are doing in that moment, sets an intention for the session or takes 1 minute to share what's on their mind/what has their attention.

Discussion Questions

- Meng writes that this chapter is all about clarity, resolution and vividness. What does this mean regarding emotional intelligence? How does a mindfulness practice help support clarity?
- Thinking about the three self-awareness competencies (emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment and self-confidence), how would each of these serve you in your work and in life? Can you think of an example when knowing your own feelings or abilities has helped you (for example, helped your performance at work or helped deal with a tough situation with a coworker or family member)?
- This chapter introduces the body scan and journaling as tools for developing self-awareness. What other things are you already doing that naturally develop self-awareness (for example, maybe you call a friend and build self-awareness through conversation)?
- The chapter describes how we are not our emotions, the difference between "I am angry" and "I feel anger in my body." Can you think of a time when you felt a strong emotion? Were you able to move from existential ("I am") to experiential ("I feel") or physiological ("I experience in my body")? If you could, how might this shift the experience of strong emotions?
- How is the reading going so far? What are you curious about?

Practice Exercise: Journaling for Self-Assessment

- Follow the instructions for "Journaling for Self-Assessment" in Chapter 4. Start by having each person think about times or situations that have been challenging or where he or she has performed poorly. Then have everyone in the group journal on each of the four suggested prompts, setting a timer for 2 minutes for each prompt.
- After giving each person a chance to privately read what they've written, share back to the group. Did anyone notice anything surprising that arose in journaling, or did anyone become more clear when reading over what they wrote?

Closing

Give each person a chance to share a closing takeaway (for example, what do you want to remember from this chapter?). These responses can be as long as 1 minute each or as short as one word. Confirm the date, time and location of the next meeting.

Session 4: Developing Self-Mastery

Reading: Chapter 5

Mindfulness Practice

Set a timer for 5 minutes of mindfulness practice. If you haven't tried the body scan from Chapter 4, you might try it this week; here's a [10-minute version of a body scan](#) if your group is up for it.

Check-Ins

Everyone says one word about how they are doing in that moment, sets an intention for the session or takes 1 minute to share what's on their mind/what has their attention.

Discussion Questions

- If you started with the body scan, how might you connect this practice and your awareness of your physical body to the awareness of your emotional inner landscape?
- The theme of this chapter can be summarized as "from compulsion to choice." What do you think about this idea? In what ways does the mindfulness practice you've been trying support this shift from compulsion to choice?
- Self-regulation or self-management is not about avoiding, suppressing or denying your emotions. When (or which emotions) do you tend to avoid or suppress? What might you do instead?
- What are some triggers or routinely difficult situations in your life? What are the physical cues that might tell you that you're stressed, triggered or upset?
- In this chapter, Meng describes how he tries to see humor in his life, especially during difficult emotions and absurd situations. Can you relate to this? How might you see a difficult situation in your life with humor (or as a sitcom)?

Practice Exercise: Siberian North Railroad (SBNRR)

- As Meng describes in the chapter, start by pairing up and having everyone share with their partners an event that upset or triggered them. Give each person 2 minutes for a monologue: What was the event? What feelings came up? Where in your body did you feel it? Then switch and let the second person have 2 minutes to describe his or her situation.
- Then follow the instructions for the "Siberian North Railroad" in Chapter 5 to move through each step: settling attention, managing negative emotion and returning to grounding.
- Either with the whole group or in pairs, share how that went for you. When might you use the "stop, breathe, notice, reflect, respond" tool in your life, or what was a recent situation when this would have been helpful?

Closing

Give each person a chance to share a closing takeaway (for example, what do you want to remember from this chapter?). These responses can be as long as 1 minute each or as short as one word. Confirm the date, time and location of the next meeting.

Session 5: The Art of Self-Motivation

Reading: Chapter 6

Note: Everyone will need a pen and paper (or notebook) this session if you plan to do the journaling exercise.

Mindfulness Practice

Try setting a timer for 7 minutes of mindfulness practice. You might try the meditation on resilience described in Chapter 6 by having one person guide the meditation by reading the written description.

Check-Ins

Everyone says one word about how they are doing in that moment, sets an intention for the session or takes 1 minute to share what's on their mind/what has their attention.

Discussion Questions

- What's been inherently motivating for you in your work and in your life?
- Zappos' CEO Tony Hsieh describes three types of happiness: pleasure, passion and higher purpose. Do you agree with this concept of happiness? How do you relate to each of the three?
- Meng describes aligning your work with your values and higher purpose. This often has to do with doing work that's meaningful to you and/or generates a state of flow. What is meaningful to you in your work and in your life? When have you experienced a state of flow (or been completely absorbed in an activity)?
- Meng describes three aspects of resilience: inner calm, emotional resilience and cognitive resilience. Which area is most challenging for you? How can practicing mindfulness support you?
- Meng writes, "Failure is the building block of success." What do you think about this idea? When have you tried something and failed? What did you learn or gain from the experience?
- What is your experience with journaling? When might it be helpful to you?

Practice Exercise: Discovering Values, Higher Purpose and My Ideal Future

- Start with the "Discovering Values and Higher Purpose" exercise, either as a journaling practice or in pairs, taking turns to speak. If journaling, set a timer for 3 to 4 minutes and instruct the group to write continuously without pause. You might do two rounds on "My core values are..." and "I stand for..." For conversations with partners, give each person 4 minutes to speak on the same topics and then switch.
- Move to the "Discovering My Ideal Future" writing exercise. Give people about 7 minutes to write about their ideal future: "If everything in my life, starting from today, meets or exceeds my most optimistic expectations, what will my life be in five years?"
- Give people a few minutes to read over what they've written, and then share with the group. How did that go for everyone? Is there anything you want to share about your ideal future? Who can support you to create that future?

Closing

Give each person a chance to share a closing takeaway (for example, what do you want to remember from this chapter?). These responses can be as long as 1 minute each or as short as one word. Confirm the date, time and location of the next meeting.

Session 6: Developing Empathy and Understanding Others

Reading: Chapter 7

Mindfulness Practice

Set a timer for 8 minutes of mindfulness practice. You might try the "Just Like Me and Loving Kindness" meditation described in Chapter 7 by having one person guide the meditation by reading the written description, or you could try [this guided meditation \(10 minutes\)](#).

Check-Ins

Everyone says one word about how they are doing in that moment, sets an intention for the session or takes 1 minute to share what's on their mind/what has their attention.

Discussion Questions

- After reading about the science behind empathy and the concept of being "pre-wired for empathy and compassion," do you think you're pre-wired for it? In what ways do you feel wired for empathy and compassion? What gets in your way of feeling empathetic?
- Remember a time when you really felt listened to and understood by someone. What did that person do (or not do)?
- Meng writes that kindness is a sustainable source of happiness. What do you make of this?
- In what ways is empathy a skill at work? What's the connection between empathy and trust, and how would each contribute to your work environment and team culture?
- When might you use the three assumptions that Meng describes (assuming others are serving the greater good, no hidden agendas and everyone is reasonable) or empathetic listening at work or in your life (either explicitly or surreptitiously)?

Practice Exercise: Empathetic Listening

- Follow the instructions for "Empathetic Listening" in the chapter. Divide into pairs and have each person take turns speaking and listening.
- Set a timer for 4 minutes for the speaker to talk uninterrupted. The speaker can talk about a difficult situation or conflict, a time when they felt for someone else or anything else with some emotional juice.
- Give the listener 3 minutes to loop back with "What I heard you feel is..." The speaker can elaborate, and the listener can loop back again with "What I now heard you feel is..."
- Switch roles and repeat.
- Give each pair 2 to 3 minutes to share how that felt in each role.
- Share back to the group: How was that as a speaker and a listener? How might you use empathetic listening in your life?

Closing

Give each person a chance to share a closing takeaway (for example, what do you want to remember from this chapter?). These responses can be as long as 1 minute each or as short as one word. Confirm the date, time and location of the next meeting.

Session 7: Leadership

Reading: Chapter 8

Mindfulness Practice

Set a timer for 10 minutes of mindfulness practice. You might try the "Multiplying the Goodness" meditation described in Chapter 8 by having one person guide by reading the written description.

Check-Ins

Everyone says one word about how they are doing in that moment, sets an intention for the session or takes 1 minute to share what's on their mind/what has their attention.

Discussion Questions

- What do you think makes a good leader? What are some examples of good leadership? What role does compassion play for the examples that came to mind?
- Meng describes compassion as both a virtue and as a cause for happiness. How do you see compassion? Can you think of an example when your compassion for another person has made you happier?
- In the book *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't*, Jim Collins describes successful leaders of great companies as having both personal humility and ambition for the greater good. Meng describes how the three elements of compassion—cognitive ("I understand you"), active ("I feel for you") and motivational ("I want to help you")—contribute to this combination. How do leaders in your work display each of these elements? What are your strongest elements?
- Meng describes how you can cultivate compassion using three mental habits: seeing goodness in yourself and others, wishing goodness for others and being confident in the transformative power of yourself to multiply goodness for others. How might you build these mental habits in your life? When would they be especially useful to you?
- This chapter emphasizes influencing with goodness. In what ways can you, or do you, want to influence the people in your life (coworkers, family, community)? How do the skills you've learned in previous weeks support you in doing this?
- What struck you about the description of difficult conversations and the steps described? What about mindful emailing? Is there a recent or current situation where this might be useful?

Practice Exercise: Preparing for a Difficult Conversation

- Follow the instructions for "Preparing for a Difficult Conversation" in the chapter. To do this as a conversation, divide into pairs and have each person take turns. The first person will have 3 minutes to describe the "three conversations" from their point of view and then 3 minutes to describe the situation from the opposite perspective. The listener will then have 3 minutes to reflect back what she or he heard.
- Switch roles, and then allow 3 minutes for open discussion.
- Share back to the group: How was that exercise? What did you notice? When might this be useful?

Closing

Give each person a chance to share a closing takeaway (for example, what do you want to remember from this chapter?). These responses can be as long as 1 minute each or as short as one word. Confirm the date, time and location of the next meeting.

Session 8: What's Next (and World Peace)

Reading: Chapter 9 and Epilogue

Note: Everyone will need a pen and paper (or notebook) this session if you plan to do the journaling exercise.

Mindfulness Practice

Set a timer for 10 minutes of mindfulness practice. You might return to a favorite type of meditation practice that you tried in previous weeks.

Check-Ins

Everyone says one word about how they are doing in that moment, sets an intention for the session or takes 1 minute to share what's on their mind/what has their attention.

Discussion Questions

- Meng describes how this book and its practices for happiness and compassion can help contribute to world peace. What do you think of this ambition? What connections do you see between mindfulness/emotional intelligence and world peace?
- To get to world peace, Meng has three steps: the first one is "Start with me." In what way do you want to start with yourself? Going forward, what practices might you want to continue? How will you continue to develop habits to support these practices?
- What is most memorable from the book and your group's time together? What do you want to take away from this entire experience?
- If you wrote down what you hoped to gain, or more deeply understand, from reading the book and participating in this group during the first week's session, revisit what you wrote. Did you get what you expected from the book and this group?
- If you wanted to encourage someone else to read *Search Inside Yourself*, how would you summarize the content and impact of the book?

Practice Exercise: Intention Setting

- Have everyone in the group journal each of the following prompts, setting a timer for 3 minutes for each one:
 - The most important thing I learned from SIY was...
 - Knowing this, what I intend to do next is...
 - What would support me to do this is...
- After giving each person a chance to read over what they've written privately, share back to the group. What do you want to take away? What do you intend to do going forward?

Closing

Give each person a chance to share a closing takeaway (for example, what do you want to remember from this chapter?). These responses can be as long as 1 minute each or as short as one word. Confirm the date, time and location of the next meeting.