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Phenomenology of Body Awareness in Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

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Abstract

Body awareness is considered to be an important element of mindfulness-based interventions. Although studies have been done on the effects of enhanced body awareness on health and well-being, none of these studies focused on the meaning of the body and body awareness in the teaching and learning process of enhancing one's body awareness. In this paper, we provide a phenomenology of the body in the practice of a mindfulness-based intervention. We present a participant observation study about an eight-week mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) training. We analyzed, by taking a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach, what enhancing one's body awareness entails in this practice, and how participants experienced their bodies in this process. We identified four ways in which the body (not) appears in MBSR: as intermittently present, as fragmented, while 'feeling good', and while 'not feeling good'. We discussed how these body appearances can be understood through the analytic lens of Leder's disappearance and dys-appearance, and Zeiler's eu-appearance, and with Van Manen's phenomenological distinctions of the body. At the end of this paper, we considered how our findings may cast new light on one of the central tenets in mindfulness practice: to be non-judgmentally aware in the present moment.

Keywords: body awareness; mindfulness; phenomenology; dys-appearance; eu-appearance

Introduction

Half a century ago, Kabat-Zinn (1982, 2013) brought mindfulness practice, originally rooted in Buddhist meditative traditions, to Western healthcare as Mindfulness-Based

Stress Reduction (MBSR). This practice draws on Kabat-Zinn's (2020) conceptualization of mindfulness as "the awareness that arises by paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (p. xxxvii), with a non-striving attitude – which implies to focus on what is present instead of what one wants to achieve. Attention can be paid, for instance, to one's mind, one's body, one's breathing, or to anything that is happening in the present moment. Mindfulness-based practices, such as MBSR, have been widely taught, and have been the object of an expanding body of scientific research (Kabat-Zinn, 2020; Van Dam et al., 2018). Studies show benefits for patients with cancer (Ledesma & Kumano, 2009), depression, pain conditions, addiction (Goldberg et al., 2018), cardiovascular disease (Scott-Sheldon et al., 2020), anxiety disorders (Hoge et al., 2023), and for persons in good health (Khoury et al., 2015). Scientific debate on working mechanisms of mindfulness-based interventions is not conclusive and ongoing (Stein & Witkiewitz, 2020; Van Dam et al., 2018), but enhanced body awareness is one of the candidates (Dambrun et al., 2019; Gotink et al., 2017; Hölzel et al., 2011; Mehling et al., 2011; Pérez-Peña et al., 2022; Shusterman, 2008).

While MBSR has been celebrated for its effects on health and well-being, it has also been criticized. It is said that the alleged non-judgmental, non-striving attitude – cultivated in MBSR – is actually used as a goal-directed means for enhancing productivity (Purser, 2019). Moreover, Dreyfus (2013) criticizes Western mindfulness for its equation of mindfulness to non-judgmentally noticing what is in the present moment. In doing so, it ignores that in Buddhist traditions non-judgmental awareness is not the goal, but only a means for the subsequent cognitive evaluation of mental and bodily states. Against the background of these discussions, in this paper, we take a step back and focus on the meaning of the body and enhancing one's body awareness in MBSR.

While the concept of body awareness is generally understood to involve paying attention to, and being able to feel sensations in and on one's own body (Ginzburg et al., 2014), the concept is still multivariate. Body awareness can also be understood as exteroceptive perception of one's body, for instance seeing it. Moreover, body awareness can be understood as a measure for interoceptive accuracy, for instance, being able to feel the exact count of one's own heart rate (Parma et al., 2024). Yet other scholars (Mehling et al., 2009) explicitly do not adhere to these latter conceptualizations in definitions of body awareness and restrict their definition to "the subjective, phenomenological aspect of proprioception and interoception that enters conscious awareness" (p. 2). Interoception is the perception from within regarding internal organs, as internal sensations related to one's heartbeat, lungs or intestines (Leder, 1990, p. 39; Mehling et al., 2009). Proprioception is the perception from within regarding the position of joints, the tension of muscles, bodily posture and movements, and regarding one's body balance and the position of one's body in relation to the outside world (Leder, 1990, p. 39; Mehling et al., 2009; Meijsing, 2022, p. 38). Proprioception remains to a great extent unconscious, but can also become conscious, and then it contributes to body awareness (Meijsing, 2022, p. 40).

Research on body awareness and mindfulness-based interventions generally entails quantitative, psychological studies (for instance Pérez-Peña et al., 2022). Qualitative studies about body awareness are more likely than quantitative studies to address the *meaning* of the body in MBSR practice. They, for example, describe a better recognition

of stress signals (Malpass et al., 2019), less absorption in negative bodily sensations (Adamoli et al., 2021), more acceptance of and a better coping with these sensations (Hjeltnes et al., 2019; Luiggi-Hernandez et al., 2018; Pintado, 2019), more awareness of emotions (Colgan et al., 2017), less judgmental thoughts (Malpass et al., 2019), and a reduction of pain, discomfort, worries, and anxiety (Luiggi-Hernandez et al., 2018; Moss et al., 2015; Schanche et al., 2020).

What is taken for granted in qualitative studies on body awareness in MBSR, however, is the *learning process* of enhancing one's body awareness as such. So, there is a gap in literature regarding this learning process. The novelty of our study is that it focused precisely on the learning process of enhancing one's body awareness in MBSR. This study addressed the following research questions: What does enhancing one's body awareness in MBSR entail? How do MBSR participants experience their bodies in this learning process?

The novelty of our study also lies in its data collection method. Instead of post hoc reflection by means of interviewing participants after the training, we studied MBSR participants' experiences live, during an eight-week MBSR training, using the method of participant observation (Conrad, 2001). We also audio recorded the whole training. Our analysis was guided by the method of hermeneutic-phenomenological reading, going iteratively back and forth from the whole transcript of the recorded MBSR training to the details (Van Manen, 2023). To reflect on our analysis, we used a theoretical framework on the phenomenology of the body, with Leder's (1990) key concepts 'disappearance', that one is usually not aware of one's body, and 'dys-appearance', that one becomes aware of one's body precisely when it dysfunctions, and Zeiler's (2010) 'eu-appearance', that one becomes aware of one's body precisely when one is feeling good. Before we will elaborate further on our methodology, we flesh out this theoretical framework on the phenomenology of the body.

Phenomenology of the Body

To guide our phenomenological analysis of what enhancing one's body awareness in MBSR entails, and how MBSR participants experience their bodies in this learning process, we used a theoretical framework consisting of three contemporary phenomenologists who solidly ground their theories in philosophical phenomenology: Leder, Zeiler, and Van Manen. To understand one of the phenomenological traditions they stand in, we first have a look at Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body.

Central in Merleau-Ponty's (1945/2012) phenomenology, is that the body is not only an object, a corporal thing in the world, but also a subject, a lived body, that forms the zero-point of perception, orientation and possible actions in the world (pp. 73-74, 146-147). Merleau-Ponty emphasized – contra Descartes – that consciousness is not a matter of 'I think', but that it is best characterized as 'I can' (p. 139). When one is engaged in doing things, for instance grasping a cup of tea, this action is not guided by thinking about the location of one's hand and the cup. By contrast, it is mediated by one's habitual body, that is capable of acting without first reflecting on the body's posture or movements (pp. 140-146). According to Merleau-Ponty, this pre-reflective capability of doing guides one's actions in the world – these actions are not guided by explicit *awareness* of one's body.

Indeed, when a person is engaged in all kinds of activities, they are normally not aware of their body. So, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology does not directly help us to understand the practice of enhancing one's body awareness in MBSR, but thinkers in his tradition do provide the concepts to understand the practice of this learning process.

It is exactly because the lived body (*corps vécu*) or body as subject (*corps sujet*) operates on a pre-reflective level, at which it has no explicit awareness of itself, that Leder (1990) speaks of the "*disappearance*" of the body. Leder emphasizes, however, that he does not use this term in the ordinary sense of "vanishing". He uses "to disappear" in the meaning of "to not-appear" (p. 27). Leder develops a phenomenology of disappearance of the body, in which he conceptualizes three major ways in which one's body can be absent from one's awareness. The first way is "*focal disappearance*" (p. 26), which refers to the disappearance of an organ when it is itself the focal origin of perception, as, for instance, one's eyes never appear in sight directly. A second way one's body can be absent from one's awareness is "*background disappearance*" (p. 29): One is, for instance, not aware of one's legs while spotting a bird. This background disappearance can be overcome by bringing one's attention to, in this case, the legs. The third way is "*depth disappearance*" (p. 112): One is not aware of, for instance, one's viscera or bloodstream. Only some instances of depth disappearance can be overcome, for instance, by bringing attention to the pulse of one's bloodstream. By elaborating on focal, background and depth disappearance, Leder fleshes out "the body's tendency to disappear from awareness" (p. 69).

When dysfunction or pain comes in, one's body does appear to oneself: it becomes an object of reflective awareness. An aching thumb, for example, can absorb all one's attention. To describe the phenomenon that one's body appears in awareness precisely when it *dys*functions, Leder (1990) coins the term "*dys-appearance*" (p. 87) of the body. 'Dys' is a Greek preposition used in medical terminology, meaning difficult, bad, painful or not functioning well (p. 84). Contemporary phenomenologically oriented studies have used this concept to explicate people's lived experiences in health and illness. It has been used, for instance, to interpret everyday life experience of impairment and disability (Paterson & Hughes, 1999), the lived experience of bodily changes after stroke (Kitzmüller et al., 2013), of living with bodily changes after weight loss surgery (Groven et al., 2012), and of living with chronic cancer-related fatigue (Bootsma et al., 2020).

One can also become aware of one's body in neutral or pleasant circumstances, as Leder (1990) himself mentions, for instance while racing, or by following one's breathing in meditation. However, these instances of body awareness are "optional", one can choose to feel or not to feel them: they are not characterized by "demand" (p. 91). Zeiler (2010) adds to Leder's position by elaborating on the appearance of the body when feeling good, and by coining the concepts for it. Zeiler coins the term "eu-appearance" (p. 334) – 'eu' in Greek means 'good' – to refer to "the experience of the body as well, easy or good" (p. 338). She distinguishes between pre-reflective and reflective eu-appearance. 'Pre-reflective' refers to being aware of something without having consciously reflected on it, and, by contrast, 'reflective' refers to consciously reflecting on what one experiences. An example of pre-reflective eu-appearance is when a swimmer "feels the warmth of the water against her body and […] she enjoys the strength of her arms when swimming" (p. 338). This swimmer "is aware of her body as well, easy or good" (p. 338) but "does not

attend to her body as a thematic object of experience" (p. 339). When the swimmer starts focusing on the movements of her arms or on her breathing, the eu-appearance becomes reflective. Zeiler's phenomenology on eu-appearance has been used, for instance, to understand the pleasure of running, which is not limited to satisfaction afterwards, but can also be experienced during the exercise itself (Jackman et al., 2022).

Parallel to Leder's (1990) and Zeiler's (2010) line of thinking, Van Manen (2023) also developed a phenomenology of the meaning of the body in health and illness. Van Manen distinguishes five phenomenological modes of experiencing one's own body. It can be experienced as "an aspect of the world"; as "reflective"; as "observed"; as "focus of appreciation"; and as "call" (p. 426). These should not be considered as theoretical concepts, but as helpful to understand human experiences (p. 427). When one's body is experienced as "an aspect of the world", one forgets one's body in favour of the activities one is involved in, Van Manen also calls this "unaware awareness" (p. 428). This resonates with Leder's "disappearance", but at the same time adds to this that the body is still present in the body-world relation. The dimension of experiencing the body as "self-observed" can be helpful for our analysis on body awareness, as in this mode the body becomes "an object for one's own scrutiny" (p. 432). This can happen in case of injury or disease – and then it relates to Leder's "dys-appearance" – but also when one just looks at one's own hand with some curiosity and wonder – and then it adds to Leder's and Zeiler's thinking, for in this mode it is by our focused attention alone that one's body appears in awareness, and not because of pain or pleasure. Moreover, Van Manen adds to this that in case of illness, our body can also become something we will "reflect" (p. 430) on, which indeed implies yet another dimension of body appearance.

The phenomenological concepts and distinctions elaborated by Leder, Zeiler, and Van Manen, provide us with a lens to reflect on our empirical findings. They will help us to understand the different ways in which one's body appears in the learning and teaching practice of enhancing one's body awareness in the practice of MBSR.

Methods

This study is designed as a participant observation of all sessions of an MBSR training. Participant observation is a research method in which the researcher is embedded in a situation to understand the participants' perspective. The division between participation and observation may vary per study (Conrad, 2001). In our study, the participant author took fieldnotes and audio recorded the whole training, which together formed the observation part of the study. During the MBSR training sessions, the participant author fully participated in the MBSR training, just like the other participants, which constituted the participating part of the study. MBSR is a standardized mindfulness training (Baer, 2003). Formal exercises in this training include body scan meditation, sitting meditation, yoga exercises, and walking meditation. The data for this study were collected during all 8 training sessions of an MBSR training, with a duration varying from 2 ¼ to 2 ¾ hours, at a mindfulness education institute localized in an urban area in the south of The Netherlands, from March until May 2019.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the ethics review board of Tilburg University (identification code: REDC # 2019/08). All study participants, including the trainer, gave their informed consent to participate in the study prior to their inclusion in the study.

The total of participants in this study was 12, including the participating first author and including the trainer (4 male, 8 female, age range 24 to 52 years old, all white). Most participants enrolled in MBSR for relief of stress complaints caused by stress at work or in family life. No specific somatic diagnoses were in play. Participants themselves mentioned these reasons in group conversations during the training. This participant observation study was based on an analysis of what was said during the training, either spontaneously or in guided interaction between the trainer and the training participants. Rich first person accounts of participants' experiences came to the fore, spontaneously, as well as through the trainer's conversations with the participants during the training. In order to not interfere with the natural course of the training, the participant researcher did not conduct interviews herself. For the same reason, we did not collect individual background characteristics. The participant researcher journaled on her first-person experiences with the MBSR training.

The first author transcribed verbatim all 8 recorded training sessions of the MBSR training. Pseudonyms were used in the transcript and all geographical names were replaced by aliases to protect participants' anonymity. For this paper we translated fragments from Dutch to English.

The participating researcher (first author) did not have prior experience with mindfulness-based practice. She did have over twenty years of experience with Zen meditation, a related practice. The second and third author did not have experience with mindfulness-based practice or Zen meditation. Our mixed experience with meditation practices helped us to recognize, and bracket, our own assumptions about mindfulness-based practice.

Our analysis was guided by a hermeneutic-phenomenological reading, as proposed by Van Manen (2023), which we applied to the transcript of the recorded MBSR training. According to this method, one should distinguish three levels of reading to explore phenomenological themes in a text: holistic, selective, and detailed. All three authors were involved in the iterative process of reading and re-reading, while going back-and-forth between the whole and the parts of the transcript. We articulate our methodological steps more explicitly in the following paragraphs.

Through holistic reading, one endeavours to express the main phenomenological meaning of a text in just one phrase (Van Manen, 2023). We captured the meaning endowed to enhancing one's body awareness in MBSR in the following phrase: *It is a learning process – do not blame yourself for being unaware, but compliment yourself for noticing.* This was not only an expression that often returned in the manuscript, but this phrase also appeared to us to be a key phrase that covered the phenomenological meaning of the learning process. The learning process in MBSR appeared to be a never-ending process. And this is precisely what participants had to learn: that learning in mindfulness practice is an ongoing process. Participants learned that it is not about mastering to be aware all the time, but – by contrast – about noticing when one is not aware. This noticing should

not be followed by blaming oneself, but by complimenting oneself. The key phrase we selected, catches the whole meaning of the learning process as it showed itself in MBSR, and it also catches the mode in which the learning process evolved, namely in a mild way. Capturing the phenomenological meaning of the whole text in just one phrase was based on a creative process, which was also influenced by the participant author's own experience during the MBSR course.

Table 1

An Illustration of the Transition from Transcript Quotes to Themes

Quotes from transcript	Themes	Overarching theme
"And then feel how the air flows in, and how your torso expands somewhere." (Trainer)	Trainer's concrete suggestions what to feel in one's body	Feeling the fragmented body
"Maybe your legs feel heavy, or maybe, by contrast, they feel light." (Trainer)		
"So, then I had my jaw still tensed." (participant Clark)	Participants' concrete descriptions of what they felt in their bodies	
"I felt tension in my whole back and stabs of pain in my chest." (participant Hannah)		
"And then go on, and relocate your attention to both your upper arms." (Trainer)	Trainer's instruction to bring one's attention to the body or a part of the body	
"And like this, bring your attention to the lumbar region, the lower back." (Trainer)		
"And then I did not feel my other foot." (participant Clark)	By shifting your attention, you let go of something else	
"And also, when you said to bring my attention back, then it disappeared again, it was gone, suddenly." (participant Lucy)		

Through selective reading, we identified various themes regarding the meaning of the ongoing learning process of enhancing one's body awareness in MBSR. To help us organizing the selection and identification of themes, we used the open coding software ATLAS.ti. To ensure reliability, coded transcript fragments were verified by the third author, and parts of the transcript were also coded by the third author. The iterative process of grouping coded text fragments into larger themes, and to subsume them under overarching themes, was in the end a creative process. An illustration of the transition from transcript fragments to themes and overarching themes, can be found in Table 1.

Through detailed reading, we analysed selected transcript fragments. The iterative reading of these fragments was geared to revealing of how their own body (not) appeared to participants in MBSR.

In the next section, we present our analysis of the learning process of enhancing one's body awareness in MBSR. While writing this section, we explicitly bracketed our thoughts and presumptions on causes or working mechanisms, as much as possible, to commit ourselves to the quest for phenomenological meaning – this is how things appear to us by themselves (Van Manen & Van Manen, 2021). The writing process was iterative, and all three authors were involved in it. This joined writing formed the last step in our phenomenological analysis.

Phenomenological Themes and Discussion

In each of the 8 sessions of the MBSR training we studied, formal exercises were done to become aware of one's body. In the 'body scan', for example, the trainer's voice directed participants to focus on different parts of their bodies and guided them to become aware of bodily sensations. Other formal exercises were 'scanning' one's body during walking or during yoga exercises. Also guided meditation exercises were used to evoke negative or positive thoughts and feelings on purpose, and to experience the accompanying bodily sensations. Besides giving instructions to the participants for doing these exercises, the trainer also engaged the participants in conversations about what they experienced during the exercises and during the learning process. Enhancing one's body awareness in MBSR is an ongoing learning process. We identified four phenomenological themes, that each adhere to different ways in which the body appears in this process: as intermittently present, as fragmented, while 'feeling good', and while 'not feeling good'.

Theme 1: The Intermittently Present Body

The process of bringing attention to one's body and becoming aware of bodily sensations appeared to be difficult for participants. Participants said that their attention floated away from their bodies to sounds or thoughts. So, their bodies disappeared from awareness (Leder, 1990) – did not appear in awareness. This difficulty to keep one's attention on the body, is a part of the body scan process: it is an explicit part of the learning process to become aware of this being distracted, time and again. The trainer stressed that "being distracted is not the failure of the exercise, it is the success of the exercise", and the only thing participants should do is "just notice" the distraction and bring back their attention to their bodies without judging themselves for being distracted.

> *Iris: I noticed that each time my thoughts went off again. I tried to focus on my body again and thought, oh I'm here at this part of my body and that is where my attention should be now.*

Iris became aware that she was distracted from doing the body scan exercise. She also noticed that this happened time and again, emphasized by using "each time" and "again" in the same sentence. So, Iris became repeatedly aware of her own unawareness. Moreover, when she noticed that she was away in thoughts, she tried to focus on her body again. She remembered – implicitly expressed in "[I] thought, oh I'm here" – what she had been doing, namely focusing on a specific body part. Bracketing the processes that may be involved in suddenly remembering what one was doing, and bracketing that 'mindfulness' originally comes from 'sati', which means 'remembrance' (Bodhi, 2013), we can describe the phenomenology involved, how it was experienced. To remember what one was actually doing, was experienced here as the moment between being distracted and trying to focus again, and was described as a suddenly upcoming thought: "Oh, I'm here." Iris also realized where her attention "should" be. So, she interprets that a certain normativity – implicit norms about what is good, bad, or permissible – is involved in the training process, although the trainer told her not to judge herself for being distracted. We can discern a paradox here, between the trainer's gentle "just notice", and the participant trying over and over again to focus her attention on the body. This paradox is also discerned by Shapiro and colleagues (2018): the paradox of effort versus non-striving – mindfulness practice paradoxically requires both effort and an attitude of non-striving.

The phenomenology of lived time – how time is experienced – in this body awareness enhancement process, is more complicated than can be described by *being here now*: As soon as Iris concludes "Oh, I am here now" and this is where her attention "should be now", time has passed, and the moment has gone. This aligns with Purser (2015), who states: "Even the act of paying attention itself requires time or duration. By the time such attention occurs, the moment labelled as the present has already passed away" (p. 683). As Van Manen (2023) concludes: "So, the important realization is that while phenomenology always somehow is preoccupied with the instant of the now (however broadly this is conceived), the now is always absent" (p.121). So, we see an analogy between mindfulness practice and the practice of doing phenomenology (Van den Bold, 2023; Van Manen, 2023, p. 35): The present, which is pre-reflective – not yet reflected on – escapes from our attention in mindfulness practice, and it escapes from our reflection in phenomenological practice. As reflecting on the present moment is always mediated by language, and is always performed in time, it is always delayed.

So, the learning process of enhancing one's body awareness is entangled with becoming aware of one's own unawareness. This is in line with Christopher and colleagues (2014), who interviewed Zen Buddhists, and found that getting to know one's own unawareness of the body is an important element in meditative practices. However, the often used MAIA scale to measure body awareness, contains no questions regarding awareness of one's own unawareness (Mehling et. al., 2012; University of California, 2018). So, our findings contribute to a deepening of the conceptualisation of body awareness in this scale. Drawing on Leder's (1990) phenomenology, we can say that in the process of becoming aware of one's unawareness in MBSR, "the body's tendency to disappear" (p.

67) is focused on. As becoming aware of the body's tendency to disappear, is alternated with awareness of one's body, we identified this phenomenon as *the intermittently present body*. Becoming aware that one was not aware of one's body, is in itself a learning process. A process that, according to the trainer, one should engage in gently. It was characterized by the trainer as 'puppy training' – like training your dog with cookies and not with punishment:

> *Trainer: And time and again, no matter how long you are away in thought or, how far away, or how often your attention wanders, never mind. Compliment yourself for noticing.*

Participants should not blame themselves for being distracted, but should compliment themselves, each and every time they became aware of their distraction. No matter "how long", "how far", or "how often" they are distracted. This did not apply only to the formal exercises or to the MBSR training period, but went far beyond that. It does not matter how long you have been unmindful, be it minutes or maybe months or even years, so the trainer emphasized, whenever the moment comes that you notice that you are not mindful: "Compliment yourself." The following experience was written down by the participating author, almost a year after the MBSR training period, directly after a walk in the forest, during which she found herself worrying all the time, not paying attention to the walk in the forest at all:

> *I am not present, I am distracted all the time, negative thoughts. I accuse myself for it. I try to be present. It does not work. Until it suddenly dawns: compliment. Compliment. I think I did not really feel this earlier. Theoretically, I knew. But I did not practice. Compliment.*

So, the MBSR learning process can stretch out long after the end of the course. Moreover, the allegedly non-judging, gentle, attitude the trainer taught the participants, has an asymmetric evaluative structure: *not blaming* yourself for not being aware, and *complimenting* yourself for noticing your unawareness. So, there is a cognitive evaluation implicit in the allegedly non-judging attitude in MBSR. This contradicts Dreyfus' (2013) saying that in Western mindfulness cognitive evaluation of mental and bodily states is missing. There are indeed cognitive evaluations involved in MBSR: it is good to notice your unawareness, and it is good to compliment yourself for it – it is not good to blame yourself for not being aware.

Summarizing, it was difficult for MBSR participants to become aware of their bodies. They also had to learn to become aware of their own unawareness. In the MBRS learning process, being aware of one's body alternated with being unaware of one's body. We identified this way in which the body (not) appears in MBSR: 'the intermittently present body'.

Theme 2: The Fragmented Body

To help the participants becoming more aware of their bodies, the trainer guided the participants in excercises like the body scan. During the body scan, participants were lying on the ground with their eyes closed, and the trainer guided them to bring their

attention one by one to the different body parts. The trainer instructed the participants to feel these different parts of their bodies, and gave suggestions about what they could feel, such as feeling contact with the floor or with their clothes, or feeling warmth or cold. Other suggestions regarded proprioceptive feeling – feeling how one's body is located in space, feeling the position of one's limbs, trunk and head. Also suggestions for interoceptive feelings were made, like feeling one's heartbeat, or feeling air in the nostrils:

> *Trainer: And then bring your attention to your nose. Just feel how air flows in and out. Maybe you can notice something about the temperature. Maybe some difference in temperature between in and out.*

The trainer's suggestions were intended descriptively, not normatively: he described what can be felt – "maybe you can notice" – not what one should feel. "Sometimes you feel something. Sometimes you feel nothing. Either way is fine." As the trainer put it: "Avoid thinking 'I have to feel something', for then you are starting to think again and that is not the goal." Here we see the paradox of non-judging as norm, and the paradox of striving not to strive.

In the above examples, becoming aware of one's body coincides with becoming aware of the world – feeling the floor, feeling the airflow, or feeling the body's position in relation to the horizon. This intertwinement between body and world shows the body's phenomenological ambiguity. The body is an object in the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012, pp. 73-74), or put in other words: the body is an aspect of the world (Van Manen, 2023, p. 426). The body is located in the world, and is in physical contact with other objects – the floor – and other aspects – airflow – in the world. So, in the body scan the body is experienced as object in the world. But at the same time, the body is felt from within and experienced as one's own, as a subject (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012, pp. 73-74): *I* become aware of my body. This finding about doing the body scan in MBSR, adds to phenomenology, as it shows that the body as an object and the body as a subject can coincide at the same moment in experience – this is part of the learning process in MBSR.

Salient in the phenomenology of doing the body scan, is that one becomes aware of parts of one's body, one by one. It is not the whole body that appears in awareness, but the different body parts. We refer to this as *the fragmented body*. By bringing their attention to specific body parts, participants also became aware that other parts had vanished from their awareness:

> *Fiona: Erm, one moment I was like with that left leg, erm, I felt that very much and then all of a sudden I was like, hey but my right leg seems like gone.*
>
> *Trainer: Gone. Oops.*
>
> *Fiona: Being absent. And then we went to that side again and then it happened to me the other way around. […]*
>
> *Trainer: When did you notice this?*

> *Fiona: When we went to the left leg as a whole. And then it seemed that I could not feel my right leg.*
>
> *Trainer: Okay. So, it may be that you notice different sensations by an excercise like this. That a certain area is really completely gone. It is there indeed. But at that moment it is not on the foreground.*

It is interesting to see that Fiona emphasized her experience of her right leg as being "absent" and "gone". She was aware that she could not feel it. With Leder (1990) we can say that Fiona's right leg disappeared from awareness – the bodily feeling of her right leg did not appear in her awareness. But this does not fully capture the phenomenology of Fiona's experience. Fiona was indeed aware of this disappearance, aware of it *as an absence*, as reflected in the words she used to describe her experience. Tentatively, we could call this a reflected disappearance, instead of an unreflected disappearance. Fiona's description in this example is phenomenological – she describes the phenomenon of her right leg disappearing from awareness. By contrast, in the trainer's remark that Fiona's leg has been there all the time, we can recognize what Husserl (1931/2013) calls the natural attitude – taking for granted that the leg has been there as an object in the world (as cited in Van Manen & Van Manen, 2021).

In the body scan, according to the trainer, one is supposed to feel one's own body, and not to think about it or to visualize it. As the trainer put it: "The point is precisely to just feel without thinking." It is through one's bodily capacity of feeling or sensing that one's own body can become the object of attention. However, physically feeling one's own body is a learning process as such:

> *Julia: If I have to focus my attention on a specific body part at a particular moment, I find it pretty difficult to visualize that. […] When I see that my body is blue and that the part where I am to focus on is red, it becomes, a bit easier to visualize and to maintain that attention.*
>
> *Trainer: Why would you want to visualize it in colour?*
>
> *Julia: Because that is easier for me, I am not sure why.*

Julia understood focusing attention to a specific body part as "to visualize" that. It was helpful for Julia to visualize colours for the different body parts: attention is red, non-attention is blue. Again, there is a normativity involved in the training process: to visualize colours is not applauded, as it is a form of thinking, according to the trainer. Phenomenologically speaking, we could say that to visualize one's body is to consider one's body as an object, while to feel one's body from the inside is to experience one's lived body, the body as a subject. According to the trainer, in the following excerpt, Giselle did manage to feel her leg, and to feel how her leg became aligned with her breathing, after an exercise in which she had to breathe towards her leg:

Giselle: When you said to breathe toward your foot, and I focused on my leg, it really felt as if my leg became sort of a balloon. My leg was aligned with my breathing.

Trainer: Good. By breathing toward that leg that you really changed something. For many people the suggestion to breathe towards your leg evokes thoughts. Just engage in the feeling.

So, the body is, on the one hand, the object of attention in mindfulness practice: the body is used as an object to reach mindful awareness (Bodhi, 2013; Depraz, 2019; Dreyfus, 2013). With Van Manen (2023) we could say that this is the self-observed mode of the body (p. 432). However, on the other hand, we see that the process to reach mindful awareness is also mediated by the body as subject. This is because enhancing one's body awareness implies to become aware of one's own lived body, so, to feel one's own body as a subject. We can say that the distinction between *having a body* and *being a body* is blurred in mindfulness practice, which is in line with the supposed non-dual approach of MBSR (Dunne, 2013). Although the distinction between the body as object and the body as subject is supposed to be overcome in mindfulness practice, expressing this non-dual, non-conceptual experience into words, however, remains problematic (Grossman & Van Dam, 2013; Sauerborn et al., 2022; Shapiro et al., 2018; Van den Bold, 2023).

Summarizing, MBSR participants were instructed by the trainer to feel specific parts of their bodies. They became aware of parts of their bodies, one by one. It is not the whole body that appears in awareness, but the seperate body parts. We identified this way in which the body (not) appears in MBSR: 'the fragmented body'.

Theme 3: The Body when 'Not Feeling Good'

In the MBSR course, the trainer explained that the participants were going to learn to become aware of their bodies during neutral, difficult and pleasant circumstances. This is in line with MAIA scale's item *noticing*, which comprises awareness of neutral, comfortable, or uncomfortable sensations in one's body (Mehling et. al., 2012; University of California, 2018). In this section, we zoom in on experiencing one's body when *not feeling good*, and in the next section we discuss bodily experience when *feeling good*. Some instances of noticing one's body in difficult circumstances in the MBSR training can be described with Leder's (1990) concept of dys-appearance, as in the following excerpt:

Hannah: The back of my head was troubling me and then I thought, why is that cushion so thin? Perhaps you can just change your position a bit to relieve that sensation? Am I allowed to put my cushion in a different way?

Trainer: And did you do that?

Hannah: Yes, I did change the position of my head a little bit.

Hannah talked about her experience with lying down on the floor during the body scan. We see that "the back of her head was troubling" her. The physical strain of prolonged meditation postures may cause unease and pain. Becoming aware of specific parts of one's body because of pain, is an instance of dys-appearance. We see that Hannah became aware of the train of thoughts that accompanied the dys-appearance of her body. First, she thought of something she could not change: "Why is that cushion so thin?" By the way she formulated this question, we can tell that Hannah wanted the situation to have been different. But after that, thoughts came up about the things she would be able to change in the situation: her own position on the floor and the position of her cushion. In daily life, when a prolonged posture aches, this can be seen as a sign to move one's body, but in the artificial circumstances of an MBSR course, maintaining a certain posture is part of the practice. We see that Hannah was not sure what she was allowed to do. She talked to herself, deliberating what she could do, and what she was allowed to do. Eventually she decided to change the circumstances, by changing the position of her head. The alleged present moment awareness that is practiced in this body scan, appears to have a temporal ecstatic structure – it is not only awareness of what is now present, but this awareness stretches out to what has been, as well as to what will be. Indeed, Hannah did not only feel the pain in the back of her head, but eventually also came to terms with the situation in which she found herself – lying on such a thin cushion – and deliberated about possibilities to change the situation for the near future – changing her bodily posture.

> *Hannah: I have all sorts of fearful thoughts. About my body, about what I feel. My arms became so heavy that I thought maybe I will not be able to lift them anymore. Really weird thoughts cross my mind. I think it is rather silly to have those thoughts, so then I have a judgment on that again.*

Hannah got fearful thoughts about the heaviness of her arms during the body scan. Although this was an unpleasant situation for her, in which she was aware of her body, we cannot take this testimony for an instance of dys-appearance, as Hannah's arms did not appear in her awareness because they were painful or not-functioning. We can describe this instance of body awareness more aptly by using Van Manen's (2023) mode of the body as self-observed (p. 432). Hannah was focusing her attention on her body, and we could say that she felt the heavy feeling that can come with relaxation of the muscles. However, if we bracket what may have caused the feeling of heaviness, and if we bracket the question whether Hannah was effectively able to lift her arms or not, what she experienced was this heavy feeling in her arms accompanied with fear. We can describe this with Van Manen's mode of the body reflecting on itself – the body as reflective (p. 430). While practicing non-judgmental present awareness in the body scan, Hannah became aware that she was full of judgmental thoughts: she responded to the feeling of her body – heavy arms – with thoughts of fear. Subsequently, she responded to this response by evaluating these thoughts as weird and silly. On top of this, she was aware that she had a judgment on her own thoughts. However, what Hannah did, is exactly what was taught to the participants in this MBSR training: not only to become aware of their bodies in unpleasant circumstances, and of their reaction about these feelings in their bodies, but also of their reaction to that reaction. As the trainer said: "Notice it. It is already there. But how do you respond to it?"

> *Trainer: And if you detect some discomfort, some tension, unrest or tiredness, is that okay? And if it may not be there, then see if your reaction may be there. I prefer it not to be like this. See if you can notice that thought in a gentle manner and then just come back by feeling what it is the here and now.*

The alleged nonjudgmental attitude that is taught in MBSR, is multilayered. First, participants are taught to notice the unpleasant bodily feelings – discomfort, tension, unrest, tiredness – and then they are taught to ask themselves whether these feelings are okay. Here again, we see a combination of the body as self-observed and as reflective (Van Manen, 2023, pp. 430, 432). Can you just let these feelings be? And if you cannot, then just notice this thought: "I prefer it not to be like this" and notice it in a gentle manner. This is in line with the MAIA scale, which contains items on *not-distracting* oneself from sensations of pain and discomfort and *not-worrying* about them. However, MAIA does not contain questions about one's reaction to one's negative thoughts about sensations of discomfort, and also no questions about one's reaction to one's not-wanting these sensations (Mehling et al., 2012; University of California, 2018). Becoming aware of these second- and third-order reactions, becoming aware of one's reactions to one's reaction to 'not feeling good' is not covered in MAIA. Tentatively, we could say that this finding adds to the MAIA scale. The trainer told the participants that becoming aware of sensations of discomfort in one's body, may change these feelings of discomfort: because participants will actively change their situation, or because they will redirect their attention to their breathing, or because these feelings of discomfort may change spontaneously:

> *Trainer: Just start feeling. Recognize that sensation is restlessness. […] Try to let that restlessness be. Just think, OK I am just a bit restless and then maybe it will just disappear spontaneously.*

Participants not only learned to become aware of unpleasant feelings in their bodies and their reactions to them, they were also taught to recognize bodily changes during stress or while having negative emotions. The trainer introduced exercises with the explicit aim to induce stress or negative feelings – through guided negative visualizations, through evoking negative thoughts, or by remembering a negative situation.

> *Trainer: A little bit of irritation, a little bit of shame, a little bit of jealousy, a little bit of anger, can all be felt somewhere in your body. This is the process. The process of developing those little tentacles of awareness.*

The way participants experienced their bodies during stress or while experiencing negative emotions differed from participant to participant. Some partipants expressed that to notice the specific, often subtle, changes in their bodies during distress was a real discovery to them:

> *Daphne: I discovered the furrow between my eyebrows.*

> *Clark: I didn't know that my face has so many muscles.*

> *Giselle: I can tell by my voice, there is a subtle tremor. […] I can feel a tension in my jaws. Before this training, I was never aware of that.*

Participants had to practice becoming aware of the subtle bodily changes, these changes were not salient before. Therefore, we cannot use Leder's (1990) terminology of dys-appearance here – as in dys-appearance the body appears in one's awareness precisely because of pain or dysfunction, one does not have to make an effort to become aware. Once again, in this case we can aptly use Van Manen's (2023) notion of the body as self-observed. According to the trainer, in MBSR the body can be used as personal indicator of stress or discomfort. The trainer used multiple metaphors for this: the body as a "weather radar", a "feeling radar", an "alarm-bell to wake oneself up", and a "traffic-light". However, we can say that the phenomenology of this process is more complicated than this. The subtle bodily changes participants have to become aware of, cannot be seen as an "alarm-bell", for the same reason these cannot be labelled as dys-appearance. When participants "do not feel good", or when they are in an unpleasant situation, they have to learn to feel their bodies, to feel the subtle changes in their bodies. These subtle bodily changes cannot be considered to be a similar phenomenon as the flaming pain that can indeed be interpreted as a warning signal when one stands too close to the fire. These subtle changes one has to discover by paying close attention, concord more with Shusterman (2008), who claims that people have to get to know their individual somatic reactions to stress as a form of self-knowledge and that by this awareness these somatic reactions may change. This also corresponds with Leder's (2022) later work, which specifies this process of becoming aware of one's body in mindfulness training as 'witnessing', and classifies it as one of the eight ways of healing the body.

While some bodily experiences during stress or negative emotions were more idiosyncratic, some bodily changes experienced by the MBSR participants were fairly common, such as interoceptive feelings in the stomach and experienced changes in one's heartbeat or way of breathing. Participants also noticed changes during distress in specific body parts like their arms and shoulders, or a sense of restlessness in their whole body. To be aware how one's body can be experienced during stress or negative emotions is also covered in the MAIA scale, in the item *emotional awareness*, described as "awareness of the connection between bodily states and emotional states" (Mehling et al., 2012; University of California, 2018, p. 2). This aligns with insights on emotion regulation therapy – the first step in these therapies is to learn to feel bodily sensations, which appears to be difficult for people (Price & Hooven, 2018). Giselle told in the last training session, that she managed at last to feel first, instead of thinking, in situations at work that were stressful to her:

> *Giselle: In the beginning I thought how on earth am I going to practise this at work. Well, the last two weeks I have noticed more and more that I did succeed in practicing it. Even in a split second. That instead of thinking, I first engaged in feeling and only after that, thinking. That has brought me a lot. More often I let things be and I don't want to interpret or fill in right away.*

There is a time structure involved in Giselle's testimony, that cannot be described as only relating to *being unjudgmentally aware in the present moment*. Giselle started with "in the beginning", by which she looked back at the period she started the MBSR course, and

told that she was then looking ahead and thought she would never be able “to practice this at work”. Then she looked back again on a shorter period, “the last two weeks”, and told that something had gradually changed in the course of those two weeks: “more and more” she succeeded to practice it. Then she related of what we could interpret as present moment awareness – “even in a split second” she was able to “engage in feeling” instead of thinking. “First” feeling and “after that” thinking. So, there is still thinking involved, but Giselle practiced to feel “first”. Then, at the end of her testimony, Giselle looked back on the learning process and evaluated it: “that has brought me a lot”. She ended her testimony in the present tense: “More often I let things be”.

Summarizing, experiencing one’s body, also when ‘not feeling good’, was a learning process for MBSR participants. They had to learn how their own body changed when ‘not feeling good’, and how they reacted to these bodily changes, and to their own reactions.

Theme 4: The Body when ‘Feeling Good’

In the MAIA scale, the item *noticing* comprises awareness of neutral, comfortable, and uncomfortable sensations in one’s body (Mehling et. al., 2012; University of California, 2018). In the *practice* of the MBSR course, however, we can distinguish three important differences between the learning process of noticing one’s body while “feeling good” or while “not feeling good”. Participants found it even harder to experience their bodies while “feeling good”, than while “not feeling good”. Moreover, the way participants were taught by the trainer to relate to their bodies differed for “feeling good” and “not feeling good”. On top of this, the consequences of enhanced body awareness, as predicted by the trainer and perceived by the participants, differed for “feeling good” and “not feeling good”, as we will elaborate below.

Participants were taught by the trainer to become aware of the good moments in their daily lives, and to feel how these moments felt in their bodies. Daphne told that she had become more aware how she enjoyed to go for a walk, before she had not been aware how much she enjoyed this. However, it remained difficult for her to describe how ‘feeling good’ felt:

> *Daphne: Go for a walk and then have a pint in a pub. That is really splendid for me.*
>
> *Trainer: And what makes it splendid? What happens then? What is different inside you?*
>
> *Daphne: Well, I am not busy with a thousand things at the same time. Just mere branches, bushes, stones, those are actually the only things on my mind then.*
>
> *Trainer: Ah and how does that feel?*
>
> *Daphne: Well for me splendid.*

So, eventually Daphne answered the question how it feels when you feel splendid, with a tautological “splendid”. She did not tell how she experienced her body, or what bodily

changes she noticed, while feeling splendid. By contrast, she referred to the absence of busy thoughts, and to the presence in her mind of “mere branches, bushes, stones”. So, her awareness was directed outward. With Leder (1990) we could say that her body disappeared in the background – it did not appear in awareness. Daphne did reflect on a changed way of being-in-the world: instead of being busy with her thoughts, she was directed outward to nature. With Van Manen (2023), we could describe Daphne’s going for a walk as an instance of revealing the body as an aspect of the world. “It is not the physical movement of walking itself but the meaning this walking acquires” (p. 428). In this case of walking, we have a certain “unaware awareness” (p. 428) of our body, accompanied with a change in the experience of “lived space” (p. 410) – how space is experienced.

Although Daphne became more aware of instances in daily life of ‘feeling splendid’, phenomenologically, we cannot relate her go-for-a-walk experience to Zeiler’s (2010) reflective eu-appearance of the body – Daphne did not reflect on what she felt in her body. Moreover, we cannot even relate it to Zeiler’s pre-reflective eu-appearance, as Daphne’s body did not appear in awareness. This is not what one would have expected, in theory. After all, the assignment for the MBSR participants was to become aware of the good moments, and to feel how these good moments felt in their bodies. So, feeling their bodies when “feeling good”, appeared to be difficult for participants. It is an important part of the learning process. It is good to keep in mind that MBSR is a course on “stress reduction”. So, it could be that the persons who enrolled in this course, already had more difficulty feeling the good moments. Besides, according to Leder (1990), instances of body awareness when feeling good have an “optional character”, they are not characterized by “demand” (p. 91). However, bracketing these thoughts on causality, and respecting the phenomenology: Daphne’s body did not eu-appear while enjoying walking.

Another participant became aware that cooking was a daily feel-good moment for her. She described a changing awareness of time, but she could not tell how it felt in her body:

> *Trainer: But how does it feel if something is pleasant?*
>
> *Katherine: Erm. Time flies?*
>
> *Trainer: OK. Time flies. And how does that feel maybe in your body if you are doing something pleasant?*
>
> *Katherine: Good question.*

Here again, we cannot interpret Katharine’s experience with the pleasant experience of cooking as an instance of eu-appearance or reflective eu-appearance of the body. Katherine was not able to answer the trainer’s question how she felt the pleasantness in her body. However, she did talk about a changed experience of time related to doing the pleasant activity: “time flies”. So, there was a change in experiencing “lived time” (Van Manen, 2023, p. 412). Also Fiona told that she was more aware of the good moments:

> *Fiona: I was shopping with my little son. On the automatic pilot, actually. And […] then he said, "Mummy I like to shop with you so much," and he just gave me little kisses on my hand. All of a sudden I felt that little hand in my hand much more, and I was really enjoying it. It was so good.*

Fiona said that she was acting on "the automatic pilot". In MBSR doing things on "autopilot" is opposed to doing things with awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 2020, p. 8). Fiona also described the very moment, "all of a sudden", when she realized this, and she "felt that little hand" in her own hand much more. What woke her up from the autopilot was that her son expressed his joy doing things together with her, and that he gave kisses on her hand. Fiona really enjoyed this moment. However, she did not describe how she experienced her own body while feeling good, but how she experienced her son's hand. So, again, like Daphne while walking, Fiona's awareness was directed outward, not to nature like Daphne, but to the other person. We could say that Fiona's awareness was with the connection between her own hand and her son's hand. The intentionality of what she felt – what her awareness was about – was directed to her son. So, there was a change in the relational experience of "lived self-other" (Van Manen, 2023, p. 409) – the experience of the relation between oneself and the other person. However, we can also describe the phenomenology of this experience with Zeiler's (2010) concept of eu-appearance. Albeit not reflective eu-appearance, as Fiona's awareness is not with her own hand, but with her son's. However, we can indeed describe the meaning of the body in Fiona's experience as pre-reflective eu-appearance. Fiona does feel her son's kisses – "*on my hand"* – and she feels her son's hand – *"in my hand"* – and she is enjoying it. This is the same structure of experience that Zeiler describes when the swimmer "feels the warmth of the water against her body" (p. 338), which Zeiler describes as pre-reflective eu-appearance.

Also, other participants became more aware of the moments in their daily lives that they were 'feeling good', as the trainer instructed them to do. But they did not succeed in becoming aware how those moments felt in their bodies. With a few exceptions, which can be described with Zeiler's (2010) eu-appearance: Lucy said that her face was more relaxed during the good moments, and Fiona felt a tickling in her stomach. So, we can see a difference here, when we compare this to feeling their bodies while 'not feeling good' – this was also hard for participants, but it could be done.

We can see an asymmetry when it comes to how participants are taught to relate to their bodies when "feeling good' or when "not feeling good". The trainer stimulated the MBSR participants "to be curious" how feeling good feels and invited them "to discover" what they experience in their bodies when they "feel good". So, the trainer taught the participants to discover, in Zeiler's (2010) terms, the eu-appearance of their bodies, pre-reflective as well as reflective: "Go feeling". The instructions to relate to "not feeling good" were different: participants had not only to become aware of what they could feel in their bodies, but also of their reactions to this feeling, and the main question was: "Can you let it be?"

While becoming aware of one's body when "not feeling good", was labelled by the trainer as an alarm-bell, a similar way of labelling was used to express the meaning of

becoming aware of one's body while feeling good: as a power charger or a gas station, to "re-charge" or "re-fill" one's energy:

> *Trainer: It is as if you plug yourself into one of those power chargers. […] Sometimes the day seems a total misery, while there are also joyful moments passing by, but we are often not aware of them. By giving some attention to those joyful moments and by lingering on what it does to you, how it feels to do that, then you can fill up. Then you feel, "this is also joyful".*

A participant told that being more aware of the joyful moments, helped her to reduce feelings of stress:

> *Daphne: When I have that pint of beer on Sundays, then I really enjoy that instead of doing everything at the same time. And I just notice that it helps me very much. I feel much less stress.*

According to the trainer, becoming aware of how joyful moments feel, goes together with becoming aware that "these joyful moments have already been there". So, here we see again that the theoretical notion of awareness in the present moment is phenomenologically stretched out in practice: becoming aware that "these joyful moments have already been there", implies awareness of what was already there:

> *Lucy: I notice now on this very moment that you say, don't blame yourself for those moments that you did not feel it, that I am very touched by it. […]. There are so many things we let slip by.*

Summarizing, also experiencing one's body when 'feeling good' was hard for MBSR participants. It was a learning process to feel how their bodies changed when they were 'feeling good'.

Conclusions

Main Findings

This paper addresses the questions what enhancing one's body awareness in MBSR entails, and how one's body is experienced in this process. We conclude that enhancing one's body awareness entails an ongoing learning process, which implies becoming aware of one's own unawareness, alternated with becoming aware of one's body. In this learning process, participants experienced *their bodies* as *intermittently present* and *fragmented*.

Enhancing one's body awareness also entails to learn to become aware of one's body when 'not feeling good' and when 'feeling good'. Only some instances of 'not feeling good' could be described with Leder's (1990) concept of dys-appearance, mostly participants had *to practice feeling how their bodies changed* when they were *not feeling good*. Some instances of 'not feeling good', however, could be described more aptly with Van Manen's (2023) notions of the body as self-observed, and the body as self-reflected. Likewise, how participants experienced their bodies when 'feeling good' could only in

some instances be described with Zeiler's (2010) concept of eu-appearance, as most participants did not experience their bodies at all *when feeling good*: their intentionality was directed outward – *their bodies disappeared* (Leder, 1990) in the background. Using Van Manen's (2023) notions: instances of feeling good were mostly not characterized by a change in lived body, but by changes in lived space, lived time, and lived self-other. However, the *trainer's efforts* in the MBSR teaching process remained directed to the eu-appearance of participants' bodies and the explicit reflection on this – *reflective eu-appearance*.

Our analysis, first of all, may be beneficial for further developing the construct of body awareness in quantitative scales such as the MAIA scale (Mehling et. al., 2012; University of California, 2018). For example, this MAIA scale does not contain items about noticing one's own unawareness, so it does not cover what we have identified to be a vital component of body awareness: the *intermittently present body*. Another example, although the MAIA scale contains items on noticing bodily sensations of discomfort, and items about not worrying about them, this scale does not cover higher order reactions – one's reactions *to one's reactions* regarding feelings of discomfort – which we have identified as an important element in the learning practice. So, the phenomenology of enhancing one's body awareness in MBSR, as we described in this paper, is more complex than in MAIA.

Our study, moreover, casts new light on the phenomenology of the learning (and teaching) process of *non-judgmentally* being aware – an underpinning in MBSR (Kabat-Zinn, 2020). Although the concept of non-judging plays a role in the trainer's instructions, phenomenologically, the alleged non-judging attitude is more complicated in practice. Participants were instructed 'to go feeling' when feeling good and were invited to enjoy these moments. When not feeling good, participants were invited to accept what they felt, to accept their reactions to what they felt, and if acceptance could not be done, then they should accept that they could not accept. So, there is an asymmetry, and a normativity, in how participants were taught to relate to 'feeling good' – to *feel and enjoy* – and to 'not feeling good' – to *accept and let be*. What is taught here is not "equanimity" – contra Purser (2015, p. 681) – but an evaluation of what is experienced as good and as not good, and a differentiated way to relate oneself to feeling good and to not feeling good. A similar asymmetry, and normativity, can be recognised in the difference between the trainer's instruction *not to blame* oneself for not being aware, and his instruction to *compliment* oneself when noticing one's unawareness.

Finally, our study shows that the phenomenology of *present moment* awareness – another underpinning in Kabat-Zinn's (2020) conceptualisation of mindfulness – is more nuanced in the practice of MBSR's teaching and learning process than just *being here now*. We described that the alleged present moment awareness appeared to have a temporal ecstatic structure in practice, which contains remembrance and looking ahead, as well as finding oneself thrown in a situation and projecting oneself toward the future. Moreover, in the training process looking ahead in the future played an important role. To end with the trainer's words: No matter how long you have been unmindful, *be it minutes* or *maybe months* or *even years*, whenever *the moment* comes that you notice, "compliment yourself".

Implications

Our study may contribute to mindfulness pedagogy as it deepens the understanding of some basic concepts in MBSR instruction. We have shown that the concept of 'being non-judgmentally aware' is phenomenologically more complex and more asymmetrical than is made explicit in MBSR training. It is not equanimity that is taught, by contrast, participants were taught to 'feel and enjoy' when they are feeling good, and 'to accept and let be' when they are not feeling good. Likewise, participants were instructed not to blame themselves when they are not aware, but to compliment themselves when they notice their own unawareness. Our findings may help mindfulness pedagogues to make this complex and asymmetrical structure explicit to their students, and by doing so, they could make the concept 'non-judgmental' more accessible for their students. The same goes for the concept of 'present moment awareness'. This often-used concept in MBSR has a temporal ecstatic structure – it is not only about awareness of what is now present, but it stretches out to what has been, as well as to what will be – and it is phenomenologically broader than just the 'here now'.

As we have established that the concept of dys-appearance was not sufficient to describe all instances in MBSR of the appearance of one's body when 'not feeling good', our analysis also contributes to theory development in phenomenology of health. The idea of the body as an alarm-bell or traffic light did not fully capture the phenomenological experience. Our finding that MBSR participants had to learn how their own body reacted to stress, may inspire further phenomenological health research. Additionally, our finding that it was difficult for MBSR participants to feel their bodies when 'feeling good', suggests that further research is warranted on how people could learn to be more aware when feeling good.

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