



Begin to live mindfully.

Mindfulness

Opening

Mindfulness is everywhere these days. Perhaps because of the explosion of yoga into the mainstream, we are nudged to move mindfully, work mindfully and live mindfully. Mindful tea drinking, mindful eating, mindful lovemaking—the list is endless.

But what does being mindful really mean? That's a tricky question. To have a mind that is full. But full of what? My suggestion would be full of whatever you are doing at the present moment. Not what you were doing yesterday (or what you didn't do yesterday), or will do in an hour or a week. But full with what is right now. If you are drinking tea at the present moment, your mind is full of the taste of the tea, the hydrating fluid it brings to your body, the texture of the cup as you hold it in your hand, the warmth of the tea, how your body feels as it assimilates the tea, the calmness you feel as you fully absorb the experience. Contrast this with the last time you had a cup of tea, gulping it down while working at your computer and trying to make a deadline while you simultaneously worry about making your dentist appointment on time. What about the last time you had an important conversation? Did you immerse yourself in your connection with the person you were talking to, taking the time to fully listen to their words? Connecting with their eyes, taking a step back to pick up their body language?

Going quiet, so you could fully hear their tone and any nuances that were being offered up? Contrast this with the last time you chatted with someone, checking your phone and scanning the room at the same time?

So if we can get our heads around having our minds full of the present moment, we still have to take one big step backwards and define what we mean by mind. Many of us think of our minds as our brains, the very important grey matter we carry around in the top of our heads. However important the brain is as a processor, it is simply akin to a piece of computer hardware. The hardware needs to be run by an operating system, some kind of “soft”-ware that is the true intelligence of the system. So this is where mindfulness gets interesting. What is the mind, the thing that actually gets full with the present moment, the thing that focusses on and absorbs what we are doing at this very second?

This is contentious and debatable, but my take on the mind is that relates to something intangible that would be best described as your consciousness. Your consciousness uses your brain as a processor, but it is not your brain. I like to call it “that which is you”. “That which is you” which was something viable and strong before you were born, and “that which is you” which is something that will stay viable and strong after you die. It is non-physical, but uses your physical body as a communication device (speaking to your friend), transportation device (walking around town), artistic expression device (playing guitar), and on and on. The brain is also used for all of these things, but the mind uses the brain as a very special meta-tool for all of the things you do in a day. But your mind, your consciousness, “that which is you”, is the master of the house. And this is what needs to be full of all what you are doing at any given moment, to be mindful in that very moment.



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The Problem—What's Missing?

The mind, “that which is you” has two components. The top layer, or surface layer, is a mind that is tied to your ego. Ego-mind is a helpful tool and a useful assistant. Ego-mind is what gets you out of bed in the morning, motivates you to take a shower, comb your hair, and have some breakfast. It's like a personal assistant who reminds you of the things you need to do to survive and get along well in our culture. But the ego-mind is limited, and it wants to keep you in line all the time. As if your personal assistant was starting to rule your life, and possibly keep you away from what really matters.

Below ego-mind is another mind, one which is unfathomably large and full of potential. We'll call this Mind, which is used in many traditions, and goes by many other labels. Your connection to Mind is unchangeable, it never gets altered, it is always there. What can change over time is your ego-mind, which can pile more and more insulating material and debris on top of Mind so that you feel this fundamental connection is altered or lost. But what is going on in a mindfulness practice is that you are drilling down through the clutter and debris, navigating between the interstitial spaces of ego-mind such that you get back to Mind. And in this connection you get a sense of what you are truly capable of. In Mind is stored your leadership presence, your purpose, your unique gifts to the world. And regular connection with this, re-remembering how special you are and what you have come here to do and achieve, is the purpose of mindfulness. Being fully immersed in Mind, if only for a few moments each day, will pay significant dividends in your daily life. And this contact with Mind also reminds you that your connection to It is the same as the connection all of your fellow humans share with It. And this realization brings back the understanding that we are all connected through Mind. And with that knowing, many problems get solved in a single stroke of insight.

Credibility Story/Success Story

A tremendous example of a completely mindful person is Eckhart Tolle, the spiritual teacher who has guided so many individuals to a greater understanding of their lives. Eckhart was an academic, who left that life to go sit on a park bench for ten years and immerse himself in connecting with the people that walked past him. He didn't work at a conventional job, but he was doing deep, mindful work in his connectivity to

passersby, and as a result he never went without food or drink during his park-bench period. People coming into his zone recognized being touched by his mindful presence, and acknowledged this with a cup of tea or a sandwich from a nearby shop. Eckhart was listening to his inner voice through his mindfulness, and then went on to a prolific and public career as a “rock star” spiritual teacher. Anybody seeing him up on a big stage, sitting quietly in front of thousands of people, would be struck by this tremendous example of deep mindfulness. Eckhart sits in the moment, observing his connection to all of the assembled audience members, modelling mindfulness to all.

Clear Statement of Solution

In simplified terms, to be mindful, we need to adopt a mindfulness perspective on life. In all aspects of our life, at that specific moment, be fully engaged and on task with what is at hand. This means the end of a multi-tasking paradigm, where you think you are doing multiple things at once. The trouble is, and we all know it, that multi-tasked tasks often don't get done very well and/or the experience of doing them is not fully enjoyed.

So to be fully mindful, we have to plan more effectively so that deadlines are not quite as imminent and we can enjoy the doing of our tasks and reduce the stress in our lives. By following a mindfulness mindset, we can absorb more from each experience, immerse a bit more deeply, and have the experience enrich our life to a greater degree. As the American performer JJ. Grey sings “It's the little things, the little things, that make life worth living...” Life is a stitching together of little things, to create a tapestry that is both grand and profound.

But to do this we need to think less, and be less engaged with our active mind. The active mind is what kicks us off to the next thing while we are still in the middle of the current thing. So we need to go deeper, to that mindful space that allows us to absorb and enjoy the experience at hand. Thinking less, immersing more, can make even a menial task more enriching. But to achieve this we have to be mindful of being mindful. It is a moment-to-moment practice, but will give untold benefits to ourselves and all of those around us.

Statement of Benefits

Building on the above points, a greater sense of mindfulness and its moment-to-moment practice will bring us greater focus, make us less scattered, more “Zen”. Mindfulness will allow us an enhanced enjoyment of all the experiences that make up our busy lives. Greater focus will allow us to get tasks done more efficiently and more skillfully, freeing up time for things we enjoy and may not have had time for in a less-mindful way of being. As a result, we will be better at work, a better family member, a better friend, a better citizen. Is there anyone who would not sign on for this?

Suggestions for Practices Relating to Mindfulness

The following suggested practices will help you to develop a stronger sense of mindfulness, if the related modality is integrated into your daily/weekly life. A description for each of these is given in the modality description file that follows directly after this pamphlet:

- Meditation
- Body Mindfulness
- Gratitude Attitude
- Deep Listening
- Silence
- Heart of Peace and Joy
- Heart Connection
- Watching the Mind
- Walking Meditation
- Eating Mindfully
- Radiating Inner Love

Summary-Starting Points

As the teachings from the Course in Miracles suggest ‘I rule my mind, as only I can do this’. Other people will try to influence you, the persistent and pervasive media will try to do this, but in the end you are the ruler of your mind. No one else.

So the going deeper, the movement within away from your active mind, is up to you. The increased focus, improved attention, greater enjoyment, and deeper pleasure all will be benefits that will accrue back to you as a result. The moment-to-moment practice of mindfulness will also take you out of the active mind's propensity to worry, to dwell on hypothetical situations that may or may not ever occur. This minimization of

worry has a direct correlation to the minimization of stress in your day-to-day life, both directly from the mindfulness practice itself and indirectly from the increased focus and the resulting time efficiencies that come with this. And over time you will begin to realize you are making your decisions on what to do and when to do it not from fear, but from Love. And this in turn only increases your propensity for even greater mindfulness.

Closer Story

The driving force behind the conscious development of a mindfulness practice is our desire to achieve a congruent life. A life that is consistent and congruent with your purpose, your Ideal. You have a deep purpose for being here, even though some days you may doubt this. You have an Ideal that you are here to achieve, to help birth into being. It may not yet be evident, but know that you will come to its realization in increments both big and small, and this incremental progress will be enhanced with a pervasive sense of mindfulness.

Thich Nat Han, the powerful but elemental Vietnamese monk, set his Ideal as the process of bringing peace to earth. Google's guru Cheng Made, has made the achievement of World peace his Ideal, by advancing the development of Google's Search Inside Yourself Leadership Initiative (SIYLI). Similar ideals, both based on a noble truth. And both of these individual's intentions are being birthed into being with mindfulness and congruent living.

