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Mindfulness and the Sacred Present

by Diana Brenes Seiler

"There is a sacredness to everything you perceive when you are present." Eckhart Tolle

Mindfulness has been growing in popularity, making it's way into public schools, higher education, hospitals and many other institutions. This trend points to an identified need in our society, acknowledging the powerful affect that mindfulness practices have as a tool for the individual and communities as a whole. So, what exactly is mindfulness and why has it become so popular?

According to Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D., mindfulness is the art of facing difficulties in a way that leads to effective solutions along with inner peace and harmony. In other words, mindfulness is the practice of embodied awareness, with attention to one's immediate surroundings while maintaining emotional balance. It's popularity points to the fact that in the experience of being mindful, a person's senses become fully engaged, their perspective softens and opens to seemingly endless possibilities, and a deep felt peace permeates their experience of 'being' in that endless moment. It is the act of feeling and being instead of thinking and doing. The quality is receptive, open, aware and spontaneous. Mindfulness is the experience of being at peace, without held judgment—one of humanity's chief goals.

How to achieve mindfulness

So many of us have painful experiences happen in our lives that not only take over our minds, but affect how we feel in our bodies—specifically our nervous system. We can beat ourselves up with disappointment or negatively compare ourselves to others, or wish things were different. Thankfully, we can all find ways to experience more mindfulness in our daily lives and in doing so shift our experiences. One way of doing this is to focus our attention into our bodies, which are always residing in the present moment. In being alive, our senses guide our wakeful state of consciousness through each moment. As we engage with embodiment we ground ourselves into the present moment.

Mindfulness also can be achieved by observing our thoughts and redirecting painful thought patterns towards ones that lead us onto a brighter path. There are times when our minds can feel scattered and we can have difficulty focusing. This can cause great discomfort and suffering. By redirecting our minds toward positive patterns of focus, towards thoughts that feel good when we hold them in our minds, we can overcome patterns of self-defeating thoughts or thoughts that separate us from others.

Life is a journey where we are constantly learning and growing. Rewiring the way that we internally maneuver ourselves through our lives can bring us to a state of optimism and self-love, acceptance of the things we cannot change, and help us become more proactive in reaching for the things that bring joy.

The sacred present through mindful eating

Each time we eat, we have the opportunity to experience the sacred present through the act of mindful eating. The next time you eat, take the time to be present with your food. Observe its textures and colors. Is it hot or cold, dry or moist? What is the texture like? Bring your focus to your breathing while you observe this piece of food. Now smell the food and notice how you feel when you take in its aroma. Next, simply press the food to your tongue, noticing the taste and feel its texture. Again return your focus to your breath, and relax your body as you exhale. Finally take a bite, and fully experience the chewing, noticing the texture and flavors and how they may change as you chew. Notice how you feel as you eat this food. Feel the experience of swallowing, and observe how you feel once the food is no longer in your mouth. Are there lingering flavors? Do you enjoy them? Through the practice of mindful eating, we can experience more present moments.

Enjoy the journey of opening to the moment.

SIDEBAR
Through this journey of re-patterning myself, I have brought a great sense of union between myself and others as I've come to recognize that we are all subject to our own unique experiences and traumas, to the thoughts that can overwhelm and limit us, and that ultimately we all want to feel safe, a part of a whole, and loved. This journey of self-love has brought me to a place of great compassion for others. In this process of gathering myself I have come to experience the incredible potency of simply being. I have found deep peace through watching my breath, feeling my muscles relax, feeling the sun's rays warm my face, bringing my focus back to relaxing my body, looking for beauty in my surroundings and enjoying listening to another without the need to speak the thoughts as they zip through my head, allowing space for curiosity of what will show up in the empty spaces.

Diana Brenes Seiler, LMT, is a massage therapist, massage instructor and mindfulness instructor. She has a massage office in New Paltz and does house calls throughout the Hudson Valley. For more information about her class offerings, massage trainings and private practice, call 845-641-5311 or visit HudsonValleyThaiMassage.com.

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Mindfulness classes offer helpful tools to students for handling life with greater grace and awareness, leading them to make healthier and more peaceful choices.
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