



ENGAGED MINDFULNESS

What Mindfulness is and how
we can apply it to our daily lives

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An Introduction to the Art of Mindfulness

Someone who is a mindfulness practitioner is someone who is interested in increasing both their quality of life and their personal effectiveness by developing and refining their mindfulness in different areas. For example:

- By being mindful of the good things that happen to me in my life, I can enjoy and appreciate them more
- By being mindful of difficult emotions, I can learn to manage them better
- By communicating mindfully, I can help people understand what I want of them more clearly
- By being mindful of my sport, I can learn better how to improve

Mindfulness and meditation

Meditation is *'a mind focusing on a positive object – an object that when we focus upon it causes us to become happy, balanced, peaceful or otherwise positively oriented'*.

In meditation we use mindfulness to focus; if we keep forgetting what we are doing then our meditation won't be very effective because we will keep dropping or losing our object.

Mindfulness enables us to place our attention on our meditation and hold it there without forgetting.

The function of mindfulness – practical learning from life.

What is it you want to learn about in your life right now? Once you have selected a subject, formulate a 'mindful question' that summarizes your intention. For example:

- How can I bring more meaning to my work life?
- What really makes me happy?
- What would it mean to bring my authentic self into social situations and conversations?

You can see here the list of possible subjects is endless – simply select a topic that is important and meaningful to you, then practice holding that question in your daily life, thinking about it, and acting in ways that express the answers that you come up with.

If you like you can even sit down for a period of time and practice holding that question in your mind, breathing with it and using it as an object of meditation.

If you do this for a week, you will find that your mindfulness practice using this topic enables you to learn a tremendous amount about yourself and the area you are investigating. You can create a mindfulness practice all of your own.

You're practising mindfulness already

I had a conversation the other day with a lady who felt she did not know what mindfulness was. I responded that she was already practising it whenever she used her memory. She asked how that could be and I told her 'When I was a monk the first definition of mindfulness that I learned was that it is an 'all accompanying mental process, the function of which, is to remember its object'.

That sounds like a bit a mouthful right? Actually it is quite simple: when we are doing something, mindfulness is that part of our mind that remembers and recalls what we are doing. For example:

- If I am in the middle of a conversation, mindfulness helps me hold and remember what we are talking about. Without mindfulness I would forget mid conversation, which would be both embarrassing and suggest I wasn't interested.
- If I have chosen to try and finish three emails before I break for lunch, mindfulness is the part of my mind that keeps me focused on that task until it is completed. If I lack mindfulness I would easily get distracted, and thus find myself at lunchtime without having done what I set out to do.

From this we can see that we all have some basic mindfulness. Indeed, without it we would not be able to function at all.

What real power does mindfulness give you?

We talk about mindfulness in terms of relief from stress, bringing more presence to our life and so on, but what about power?

One way mindfulness (when well practiced) gives us greater power is by giving us awareness of choice. The more consciousness we bring to any given situation, the larger the number of choices we will be aware of regarding how to act, how to feel and how to approach what we are experiencing.

Conversely, the less conscious awareness that we bring to a situation, the fewer the choices we will be aware that we have, and we will therefore have less power.

Without mindfulness we are essentially limited to our instinctive and habitual patterns of reacting and responding to life's challenges (and joys). With mindfulness we can even innovate choices, options and possibilities that we have never considered before as we actively bring our intelligence to bear fully upon the situation.

Our mind is basically our primary tool for surviving, adapting and thriving in the outer world of our career and relationships, and the inner world of our relationship to ourselves. Mindfulness is the practice of learning how to use and apply the potential of our mind in daily life. Looked at in this way there is nothing more powerful and valuable than mindfulness. Do you have time for a little now?

CONTENTS

Page

- 8 **1. Mindfulness: its relationship with happiness and performance**
Personal happiness and effectiveness at work
How you feel about yourself directly influences how you manage change
Confidence and personal responsibility increase both creativity and problem solving capacity
- 12 **2. What is self-awareness?**
Questions for beginning the process of self-awareness
Remembering, understanding, assimilating
Experiencing, feeling, interpreting – mindfully processing your reality
- 17 **3. Curiosity, courage and care – cornerstones of the mindful encounter**
What are the consequences of not engaging in the mindful encounter?
A meditation for the mindful self-image encounter
Melting the ice of the heart, cooling the inferno of the soul
- 22 **4. Honesty, release and redirection – three levels of non-judgment**
Stage one: recognizing you have made a judgment
Stage two: non-judgment
Stage three: better judgment
- 25 **5. Street mindfulness – three key questions**
What is good about my life?
What am I willing to do to make it better?
What do I need to focus on now?

	<i>Page</i>
6. Why mindfulness primes you for success	28
If being mindful increases your chances of success, why isn't everyone practising it? Three mindful questions for success	
7. Three types of attention:	31
neutral, constructive and catalytic	
Neutral	
Constructive	
Catalytic	
8. Your attention as your object	35
of mindfulness	
Beginning to control your attention consciously	
9. Some Simple Focusing &	38
Relaxing Practices	
Exercise 1: Developing your mindful concentration daily	
Exercise 2: Establishing your basic mindful flow state	
Exercise 3: Still point breathing meditation	
Exercise 4: A little more on mindful flow - the dance of relaxation and alertness	
10. And finally	46
Simple bad and simple good	

How to use this book

This is a book on applied mindfulness. It aims to present clear, practical ideas and exercises on how to integrate mindfulness practice into your daily life. The different sections of the book were originally written as articles, reflections on the authors own practice of mindfulness, and the ways that he has found most useful to integrate mindfulness into his life as different challenges have presented themselves.

Each section details mindfulness exercises and practices which you can either try out in a systematic way, one chapter after the other, or in a more organic manner, picking out the practices that you feel most drawn to.

Those who have no experience of mindfulness previously, might like to go to section entitled 'Some Simple Focusing & Relaxing Practices', which detail exercises for building basic mindful concentration.

The book is the first of a series, and deliberately kept short. The text is meant to be read slowly rather than in a rush. Taking it a page or two at a time, combining it with a little time for personal reflection is a good way to go.