

Mindfulness—life's greatest skill



What if I told you I had something that would:

- Eliminate stress in your life
 - Increase your optimism
 - Eliminate feelings of anger or loss from what others do
 - Massively increase your self-control
 - Eliminate anxiety
 - Eliminate depression
 - Improve memory
 - Enhance learning
 - Eliminate avoidable accidents and silly mistakes
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- Eliminate sleep problems
 - Eliminate digestive problems
 - Eliminate headaches
 - Eliminate urges to overeat
 - Allow acceptance of loss or unfairness
 - Greatly reduce marriage fights
 - Eliminate negative feelings causing you to suffer
 - Enhance the healthy functioning of your body
 - Avoid cancer and other immune system diseases
 - Add many years to your life
 - Be seen as a wise & level-headed person
 - Find joy and happiness in simple things
 - Eliminate worrying about what others think
 - Eliminate the need for other's approval
 - Sincerely accept things that used to really upset you
 - Find true acceptance of yourself
 - Experience much more happiness, satisfaction and joy

Many of the things on this list are accomplished with alcohol, drugs or overeating—thus their appeal. But what I am speaking of will do EVERYTHING on this list with no side-effects and it's totally free and totally under your control. This “thing” is Mindfulness.

To understand what **Mindfulness** is, it is perhaps best to start with an understanding of what **Mindlessness** is. Mindlessness is the term used to describe the natural state of thinking most of us have learned to practice. It is living life reacting to the thoughts that are constantly flowing into your awareness from your brain's activity. For example, you may be sitting at your computer and remember something your spouse said to you this morning and begin to feel sad and find yourself distracted from your work. Moments later you read an e-mail from a colleague that upsets you because its "tone". An hour later your boss comes in and gives you a complement about your report and your thoughts become occupied by those comments and you forget about meeting your daughter for lunch. Your daughter later calls you wondering where you are, and you feel ashamed and like a poor parent causing your thoughts to be on that and now you can't remember where you put your keys. Driving home you think about how bad you feel about missing your lunch date and you inadvertently cut someone off and they flip you off. You arrive home and yell at your spouse for leaving his shoes in the way because you are just frustrated with your "lazy husband". Your husband strikes back with a comment about your curling iron in the bathroom and you spend the night thinking about divorce.

This is **mindlessness**. It is reacting to the constant flow of thoughts that enter and leave our awareness causing one to be in a constant mode of subconscious reaction rather than consciously responding or choosing to let thoughts go.



Living Mindless is allowing one's thoughts to control their emotional states and thus their life. Mindfulness is simply the ability to "see" one's thoughts and feelings as they occur and to choose consciously what you want to think and how you want to feel. Mindfulness comes from the knowing that your brain is a defensive mechanism and its job is to constantly produce thoughts from fear,

judgment and comparison in an attempt to protect us from danger. Mindfulness is allowing time to think and respond if needed rather than react from the instant feelings that come from the thoughts your brain produces.

Mindlessness can be said to be: "Living by subconscious reaction." Whereas Mindfulness is: "Living by conscious choice." Subconscious reactions are what cause stress and anxiety. For example, your spouse comments that the chicken you prepared for dinner is dry. Your automatic reaction, in less than a second, is to feel emotions of inferiority and failure. From programmed habit you REACT to get out of this negative feeling by firing back your own

negative comment about something he's not so good at, failed at, or some comment to make him feel guilty or ungrateful. What's the result? A fight or "stress".

Mindfulness could also be defined as the practice of ignoring most of the negative thoughts that are automatically produced by your brain. Choosing to let them go like clouds passing by because you know they usually don't represent the truth. The truth is it doesn't matter what people think. The truth is nobody is perfect. The truth is, I can observe a negative comment and define it as helping me rather than hurting me. The truth is, I can't control others. The truth is, no amount of chicken is worth living on the edge of divorce. The truth is, I don't want to fight. The truth is, my kids deserve to see a parent role-model an ability to take criticism positively without negative reaction. The truth is stacked against what I did...so why did I do it? Mindlessness blinded me from the truth!

Mindfulness is training your brain to allow time to see the truth and pursue it more in your life.

How to Practice Mindfulness

Step #1: Take a new Belief about your Thoughts

Practicing mindfulness starts with the belief that your initial thought impulses are usually not the truth, but the reactionary function of your brain. Just like your hearts job it is to pump blood throughout your body, your brains job is to sense the environment and make lightning-fast judgments and comparisons to protect you from danger. This works well if you are driving and a car pulls out in front of you and you must react quickly to avoid an accident, but it doesn't work so well when your husband says your chicken is dry and your react by criticizing his parenting skills! Your brain was designed to react. But **reacting when it comes to emotional danger is extremely harmful to our lives causing stress, anxiety, depression, divorce, obesity, suicide and even murder!**

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With so much riding on how we consciously control our thinking, you'd think more people would pursue Mindfulness. Why don't we? First, most people don't even know there is another better way, but secondly Mindlessness is like scratching an itch —something you just feel compelled to do. You might say, "My husband just said my chicken is dry, how can I

possibly ignore that or feel good about that?” Yes, this is difficult. But training yourself to stop reacting to your feelings and instead choose your responses for the best outcome for yourself and others is maturity and will allow you to live a much, much better life and be a role model for others.

Step #2: Practice “The Pause”

The difference between a reaction and a response is time. Our brains are designed to react. This is a must to avoid physical danger. When it comes to physical danger, the faster you react, the better are your chances for survival. Ironically, just the opposite is true when it comes to emotional danger. The faster you react to emotional danger, the lower are your chances for survival or a good outcome!

Responding is defined as an answer or reply. When you answer or reply to someone or something, it assumes some conscious thought went into the answer or reply. This requires time to consciously think. “The Pause” is a powerful technique to stop your reaction and allow the thought to just sit. These few seconds is just enough to stop the detrimental reaction from occurring and screwing up everything. Have you ever said something you didn’t mean or did something you didn’t want to do and later regretted it? We all have, and it’s these things that destroy our lives! During The Pause you pull your thinking away from the desire to react with the power of asking questions.

Step #3: Get curious about your thoughts

When you get curious about your thoughts and where they came from and how they are occurring, you are summoning your ability to choose the validity or importance of the thought. Mindlessness just assumes all thoughts are valid and important...which we know is not true.



Mindfulness directs your thinking on learning about yourself and where the thought is coming from allowing for you to grow in your emotional maturity. By wondering WHY your spouse would comment on your chicken being dry or WHY you get so upset about it, you have a golden opportunity to learn something about yourself and others. Your husband might be having a bad day or in his own mindless state be unaware of how hard you worked to prepare his meal. He might be thinking about losing his job or that his beloved

Packers lost another game. Who knows? And why are you getting so defensive about your cooking? Do you define the validity of your existence as a human being on your cooking? Only

if you did, would you react so strongly to comments about it! From this, you might learn that you need to define yourself by your parenting or contribution to others rather than your ability to cook a perfect chicken.

Can you see how getting curious and looking within can develop a whole new world of self-understanding! Mindfulness will open the door and allow you to sweep-out the many stupid things that stand in the way of living your life happy, stress-free and healthy by ascending to an emotional level of maturity that few ever achieve!

The questions to immediately ask yourself during The Pause are:

- **“Why am I feeling this way?”**
- **In interpersonal conflict ask: “I wonder why he/she said or did that?”**
- **“What can I learn about myself to grow from this?”**
- **“What should I do to get the outcome I REALLY want?”**

Mindfulness directs your thinking on learning about yourself and others allowing for you to grow in your emotional maturity. It is truly the GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY that most people miss because they are too busy mindlessly reacting.

Internal vs. External Mindfulness

Practicing mindfulness of your external environment, those events that occur in your life, will help you. But what will help you even more is practicing mindfulness of your internal environment—those thoughts that come from your internal dialog. Whereas you may have only a few external events occur during your day that your reaction to could cause negative feelings, the voice inside your head is a constant flow of questions and statements that can make you feel negative or even debilitating emotions:

“Why am I so stupid?”, “Why does shit like this always happen to me?” “I just can’t control myself.” “If people knew the real me, I’d have no friends.” “God, she’s a pain in the ass.” “I just HATE this weather.” “I can’t stand people who won’t shut up.” “I just suck at this!” “I can’t believe she’s going to bring that same damn dessert again, doesn’t she know how to cook anything else?”

These are just a sample of the constant flow of statements that are constantly going off in your head. What's important to note is that many of these statements are far worse than anything anyone else would ever say or tell you! Truly you are your own worst critic. The language and hurtful things you say to yourself in your own internal self-talk can be far more damaging to your beliefs about yourself and your life than any outside influence.

The approach neutralizing the affect your internal negative self-talk has on you is to use "The Pause" and then become curious as to where that particular thought came from or just talk back to it. Here's an example that just happened to me:

I collect our aluminum cans and give them to the local Boys & Girls club. After I build up 2 or 3 bags of cans I like to take them to the collection bin at our Wal-Mart store. I've wanted to get these bags to the collection bin for the past several weeks to free up



space in my garage. Today I ran to Wal-Mart because we were out of coffee and as I was pulling away I saw the can collection bin. At that moment an internal voice in my head said: *"You dummy, why do you keep forgetting to bring the aluminum, you just can't remember it can*

you! (in a "you idiot" tone of voice)" The mindless response would be to hear that statement, agree with it and feel bad for a certain period of time, possibly screwing up the rest of my day.

But today I decided to practice Mindfulness and I instantly rejected the idea because it really didn't matter and a couple of bags of aluminum cans in my garage are certainly nothing to get down on myself about. I said out loud after hearing my internal statement: ***"Who cares....it doesn't matter! It's no big Deal!"***

The steps to eradicate negative feelings from internal thoughts are:

1. Use **"The Pause"** after you hear your internal message.
2. Get curious by asking **"Is this really true or does it really matter?"**
3. Say **OUT LOUD** your answer.

Note: Out loud talk always trumps internal voices. If you're ever troubled by some internal thought, quickly find a place you can talk back **OUT LOUD** to that thought. For example, let's say you're worried sick about something at work, go

find a place and say OUT LOUD: ***“It doesn’t matter; It’s no Big deal; I’m more than this job anyway!”*** Repeat this OUT LOUD and I guarantee you’ll feel better instantly! When the voice comes back repeat your out loud statement! Don’t give in to the internal voice; overpower it with your strength and your voice! Don’t sit and allow your negative feelings to shred your life apart just because you’re too “shy” to talk back to your internal voice out loud. Responding with an internal thought never works. Talk back OUT LOUD with strength & power and you will destroy the self-defeating feeling and in its place feel strong and powerful! That’s success! Feeling good because you know you are strong and powerful!

Train yourself to think Mindfully

If you just start trying to practice mindfulness, you’ll likely find yourself automatically slipping back to mindlessness. This might cause you to feel frustrated and give up on the idea. The best way to be successful during “game time” is to do what sports teams do—practice. To practice mindfulness, do the following exercise:

Sit in a room with no TV, radio, phone or other distractions like windows showing a busy street. What you see and hear should be constant. You can also do this outside in a peaceful environment like a park or your back yard. You must be alone and free from outside sensory distraction. Meaning nothing to see that would distract you like people walking by. Nothing to hear that would distract you like a dog barking. Nothing to smell that would distract you like a neighbor’s grill. You should be sitting comfortably in a chair or lying on the ground comfortably, so what you feel does not distract you like an uncomfortable chair. Let all of your muscles relax by taking several deep breaths and letting them out through your mouth. Each time you exhale, feel your body sinking deeper into relaxation.

Once you feel relaxed, close your eyes and imagine you are in a movie theater. This is your own private theater, so you feel relaxed and safe. On the large screen in front of you, you begin to see the thoughts that pass through your awareness. Just sit and watch. As you observe, just describe what you are seeing as if you are writing down each thought or explaining it to a trusted friend sitting next to you. Try your best just to act like a reporter observing and describing each thought rather than judging the thought or feeling emotional



about it; for example, *“Oh there’s my car payment thought.....there’s a thought about my sister....there’s a thought about dinner tonight.....there’s my painful thought about being fat and trapped.....there’s a thought that I have so much to do and don’t have time for this....there’s a thought about this being a waste of time.....etc.”*

Just sit and allow your thoughts to flow past. When you get stuck on a thought, just observe this by saying to yourself: “Look, I’m stuck on that thought about _____”

Practice this until you get the feel for being an observer of your own thoughts.

Did you start to notice the difference in being an observer of your thoughts? Being an observer allows you to create a space between the thoughts you have and how you feel about them. This skill of detachment is the foundation of mindfulness!

Try your best just to act like a reporter observing and describing each thought rather than judging the thought or feeling emotional about it

Doing this practice one time won’t make you a Mindfulness Master. Keep doing it daily as often as you can until you find yourself doing it automatically during the day and eventually it will become “how you think” most of the time. Once you reach this level, people WILL notice and so will you! Everything on the above list will begin to manifest into your life! Yes, teaching your mind to think mindfully is that powerful!

People will also start to notice a distinct change in your demeanor. You will be perceived as a joy to be around, more level-headed and calm when everyone else is stressed. You’ll be able to make much better decisions under stress, which will make you a parent, spouse and co-worker! You’ll no longer be pulled by urges to eat, smoke, criticize, judge or buy things or anything else where “I just felt like it” feelings often got the best of you. You’ll be able to lose weight permanently and live your life free from the bondage of your own emotions! You will truly be free!

Please note that like learning any other skill; you will fail while trying to learn. You will get pulled into your thoughts and experience painful emotions or get stuck on certain thoughts that really hurt and affect you. It’s OK! Recover by observing your mindlessness and get curious to understand yourself better; *“Man, I really got stuck on how the mechanic ripped me off this morning....I obsessed about losing \$300 all morning long and got nothing done....I learned how attached I am to money...that’s something I need to be aware of and work on.”*

Mindfulness—life’s greatest skill!

Learning mindfulness, I believe, is more important than learning to swim, a foreign language, how to sew, cook or even play golf! It’s the skill that allows you to enjoy life by being happy and avoid the constant stress, anxiety and fear most people experience. At the core, everything you do and every possession you have, you wanted it because it made you feel happy. But we know that the happiness you feel from having a new car eventually wears off. The happiness of a movie wears off after the movie is over. The happiness of a full stomach eventually turns into guilt. The happiness of 5 beers turns into a hangover. Most people just distract themselves temporarily from their unhappiness because they don’t know any other way. Now you do!

Avoid getting Stung!

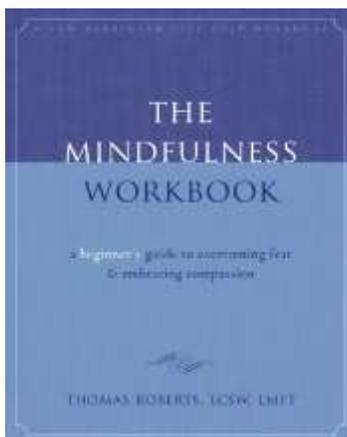
In the video I will be sharing with you, Dr. Mark Muesse of Harvard University was performing a wedding ceremony when a bee decided to land on his cheek and proceeded to crawl up his face toward his eye. Using mindfulness Dr. Muesse observed the bee rather than react to it because he knew that trying to swat it away would likely result in his getting stung. Using The Pause, he



stopped the automatic reaction most people have to a bee and was able to continue with the ceremony by allowing the bee to explore his face and then fly off. Through using mindfulness, he avoided getting stung and ruining the wedding ceremony for himself and all those present.

Most of us are getting stung every day from thinking we need to swat bees off our faces. A better approach is to use Mindfulness to be able to just let our problems go away without harming us or others with our attempts to solve what doesn’t need solving.

Ehi passiko....go and see for yourself.



An excellent beginner’s resource to learn more about Mindfulness is the “Mindfulness Workbook” by Thomas Roberts.

Visit his website to order by clicking on the book image.

For a sample Audio version of the Mindfulness Practice from this book, [click here](#)