

Mindfulness

Thank you so much for taking part in our recent meditation workshop. Here are some tips and tricks to help you get more from practicing mindfulness.

Meditation is an amazing tool to teach you how to regain control of your awareness in short, concentrated bursts, but mindfulness allows you to bring that intense focus into your everyday life.

What is Mindfulness?

Our mind is a powerful tool, but when left unaccompanied, it becomes that annoying voice in our heads. Constantly reminding us that we have bills to pay and laundry to do. Or it criticizes and complains about things that happened earlier. Essentially it dwells on the past and worries about the future. But it's completely unnecessary. And while ever you're paying attention to that voice in your head, you're not paying attention to the present moment and the physical world.

You've all experienced driving through an intersection and suddenly realizing you have no idea whether the light was green or red. You were so focused on the story playing in your head that you lost awareness of the physical world.

Mindfulness then is just like meditation in that whenever we notice that we are listening to that voice instead of being present, that we simply bring our focus back to the physical aspects of what we're doing. Studying and observing our body in action. Over time, your mind will lose its hold over you and you will no longer be pulled into the drama.

You'll also come to the realization that the world is a fascinating place. Even the most mundane objects take on a dazzling appearance. And I don't mean that things morph and change how they look like a chameleon but that, every shadow or highlight, every nook and cranny, scratch or dent, the transition of color from one object to another become mesmerizing and joyous.

Yes, I said joyous. When your mind stops chattering, there's an intense bubbling and effervescent joy that spontaneously rises from within. You don't need a Ferrari, a big house or a diamond ring to produce this happiness. You just need to be present and stop listening to your mind telling you that you'll be happy when, you have a Ferrari, a bigger house or a diamond ring.

The peace and joy is there constantly. Just sitting under a veil create by the criticism and judgment of your mind.

Best Way to Practice

That's a pretty big promise, but not unlike meditation, it can be quite frustrating. Many people try to incorporate mindfulness into their life before they've learned the skill. If you say, "I'm going to do my shopping mindfully, or I'm going to cook dinner mindfully", there are simply too many distractions that you'll forget what you're doing by the time you get to the first aisle in the supermarket or have finished preparing your first ingredient.

You'll experience moments of deep focus, but you'll also notice when you're not able to maintain that focus. And that can be disheartening.

So the best way to learn mindfulness is in small deliberate chunks in an environment you can control.

Sit on the couch. Turn off the TV and as many other distractions you can. Now, hold something in your hand that you can comfortably hold in front of you. A tennis ball, remote control, a penny, a hair clip are good examples. These are all things we've seen in the past. Our mind has no trouble identifying them. But that's exactly what our mind does. It looks, identifies it as non-threatening, and then moves on to the next thing.

We only really skim the surface of our existence. Essentially, we look but don't see.

Mindfulness aims to break this cycle by remaining focused on a single object. And each time our mind gets bored and encourages you to move on, we simply bring our awareness back to the object with renewed ferocity.

So, take a tennis ball for example. It appears as a single color, but if you look closely, the shadow side is a very different color from the highlight side. It may also pick up reflections from your hand, the sky or lights in the room that will change the color in subtle ways. But you only see those transitions if you slow down and take the time to look closely.

As you look closely, you'll notice that each fiber on the ball is unique. They twist and turn in different directions and there aren't two that are the same. When you feel like you've exhausted everything you can look at, slow down and look more closely.

Use All Your Senses

Vision seems to be our primary way of interpreting the world, but there are many different characteristics of this ball that we can observe.

It has texture and mass. It will make a sound if you tap it or rub it. It will have a smell and presumably taste too, but I'd recommend saving that sense for when you're eating your dinner mindfully.

The Real Skill

But again, the real skill with mindfulness, is noticing when your attention moved to the thoughts in your head, and just coming right back to being fully present and observing the physical aspects of what you're doing. Each time you get distracted, just come right back.

As you get better, you will be able to remain focused for longer and longer periods. And that's when it's time to take this new skill out into the real world.

I recommend practicing in this "deliberate" way for 10 minutes at a time.

Benefits of Mindfulness

As well as better focus and concentration, you will also experience long periods with a silent mind. This is often referred to as "flow" or "flow state", where you become so absorbed in your work that time itself loses meaning and the work becomes effortless.

But for me, the biggest benefit is that you'll realize that your mind is the thing that creates all the drama in your life. If there are things that regularly annoy or upset you in your daily life, you'll notice that those things still happen to you, but because you are so focused on the physical aspects of what you're doing, your mind won't jump in to complain.

So when somebody cuts you off on the highway, you'll see a car move in front of you, you'll observe your foot pressing the brake pedal, but you won't get a voice in your head telling you how stupid they were. What an idiot, they're going to kill someone. And as a result, you won't get a shot of adrenaline and an angry response in your body. You'll find that inner-peace and joy I talked about earlier.

Wow, somebody cut me off and I felt joy? What a strange concept. But you can do it.

Last Tips

Whenever you pick something up, whenever you touch something, there's an opportunity to practice mindfulness. When you jump in the car, feel the steering wheel. Feel the gas pedal under your foot. When you listen to music, listen closely to the intricacies of the piece. When you talk with somebody, focus on the sounds their voice makes. You'll still understand what they're saying, but the experience of the conversation will expand tremendously.

When you feel that joy rising, there's another opportunity to observe something physical.

You are Amazing

Congratulations for starting on this journey. It's one of the biggest self improvement steps you can take. It's not easy and it can take some time. But the human being you will become once your mind steps aside and stops criticizing and complaining about things, you will become unstoppable.

No inner monologue telling you you're not good at something. Nothing telling you that someone is better than you or that you're better than them. No defensiveness. No drama. No missing out on the present moment because you're lost in a story in your head. Instead, you'll be filled with peace and joy. In awe at everything the world has to offer.

If you have any questions, you can reach out to me directly – **mat@TheGregariousHermit.com** or visit my website **www.TheGregariousHermit.com**

You can also listen to my podcast, "Infinite Bliss" which is available on Spotify and Youtube as well as all major podcast platforms.

And finally, you can support my efforts through **BuyMeACoffee.com/TheGregariousHermit** or by checking out my book, "Understanding Happiness ~ pocket companion workbook", available on Amazon.

Thank you so much. It's an absolute pleasure for me to be able to share my knowledge and hopefully it helps you on your own journey.