

**Positive Psychology**  
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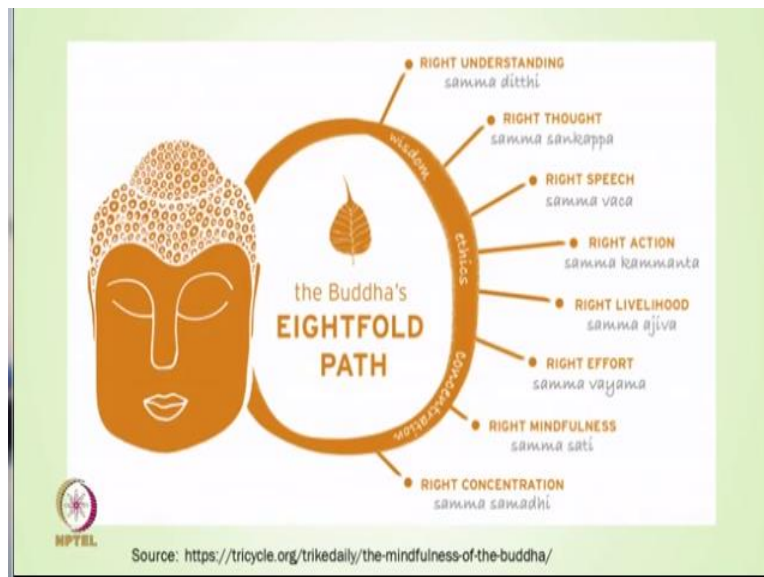
**Lecture-16**  
**Mindfulness**

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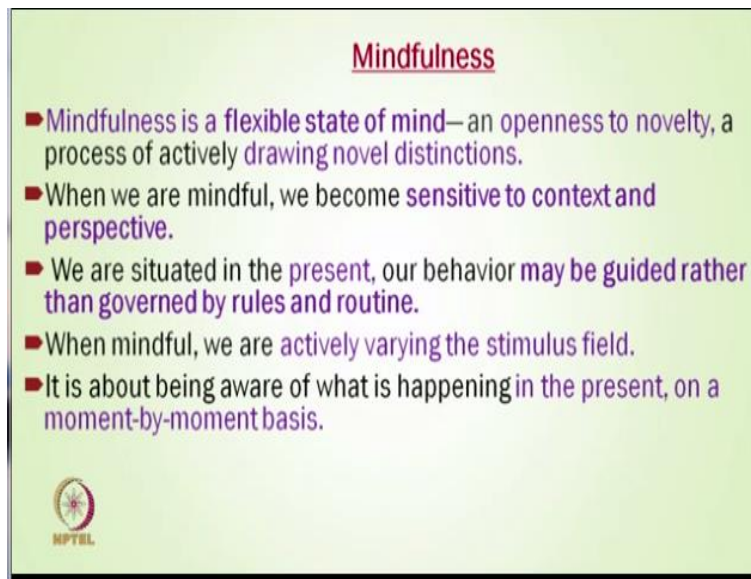
Namaskar, in this series our next topic is mindfulness.

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You must be knowing about Buddhism, the Buddha has 8-fold path which is talking about right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. We psychologists have borrowed mindfulness from Buddhism and we have highlighted it in psychology as well as in positive psychology - how it is important for us to understand human behavior as well as how mindfulness practices helping us to have higher level of well-being.

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**Mindfulness**

- Mindfulness is a flexible state of mind—an openness to novelty, a process of actively drawing novel distinctions.
- When we are mindful, we become sensitive to context and perspective.
- We are situated in the present, our behavior may be guided rather than governed by rules and routine.
- When mindful, we are actively varying the stimulus field.
- It is about being aware of what is happening in the present, on a moment-by-moment basis.

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So, let us know how positive psychologist as well as psychologist have defined mindfulness. Mindfulness is a flexible state of mind, an openness to novelty, a process of actively drawing novel distinctions. It means we have flexible state of mind. During mindfulness, whenever we change stimulus or stimuli in the environment, we notice we have differences in all these situations and our behavior is according to it.

When we are mindful, we will become sensitive to context and perspective, so once this context or perspective changes, we notice it. We are situated in the present, our behavior maybe guided rather than be governed by rules and routines. So, our behavior can be guided but we are not following rigidly these rules and routines. When mindful we are actively varying the stimulus field, it is about being aware of what is happening in the present on a moment by moment basis.

So, moment by moment basis we know what is happening in our life, there are various definitions which have been highlighted by Buddhist as well as psychology scholars who I have been working on mindfulness.

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### What is Mindfulness?

- Mindfulness is a non-evaluative and sustained moment-to-moment awareness of thoughts, physical sensations, and affective states, (Grossman et al., 2004).
- An attribute of consciousness, i.e. a state of being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present moment. (Brown & Ryan, 2003)
- A form of present-centred, non-judgmental awareness of one's mind, body and surroundings.
- "Present-centred" and "non-evaluative" are key features of mindfulness within the psychotherapeutic community and even within some Buddhist communities.

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**Mindfulness is** a non-evaluative and sustained moment to moment awareness of thoughts, physical sensations and affective states. So it means it is non evaluative process. During this process or during mindfulness we do not evaluate the things. Sustained moment to moment awareness we have and we are able to notice our thinking process, physical sensations, affective or emotional states as well as changes in thoughts physical sensations and affective states.

It is an attribute of consciousness, a state of being attending to and aware of what is taking place in the present moment. That is another definition of mindfulness, a form of present centered non-judgmental awareness of one's mind, body and surroundings. These are 2 hallmark or very important point in mindfulness. So present centered and non evaluative are key features of mindfulness within psychotherapeutic community and even within some Buddhist communities.

So, these factors have been highlighted even in psychological researches as well as when we use mindfulness in our psychotherapies.

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- ▶ “.... The clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us, at the successive moments of perception” Nyanponika Thera (1986)
- ▶ “.....keeping one's consciousness alive to the present reality” Thich Nhat Hanh (1991)
- ▶ “.....awareness of present experience with acceptance” Germer (2005)

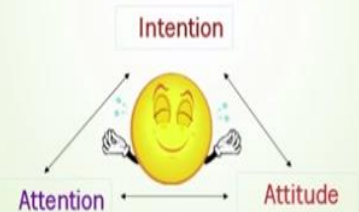



The clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us at the successive moments of perception, keeping one’s consciousness alive to the present reality - that is another definition; awareness of present experience with acceptance.

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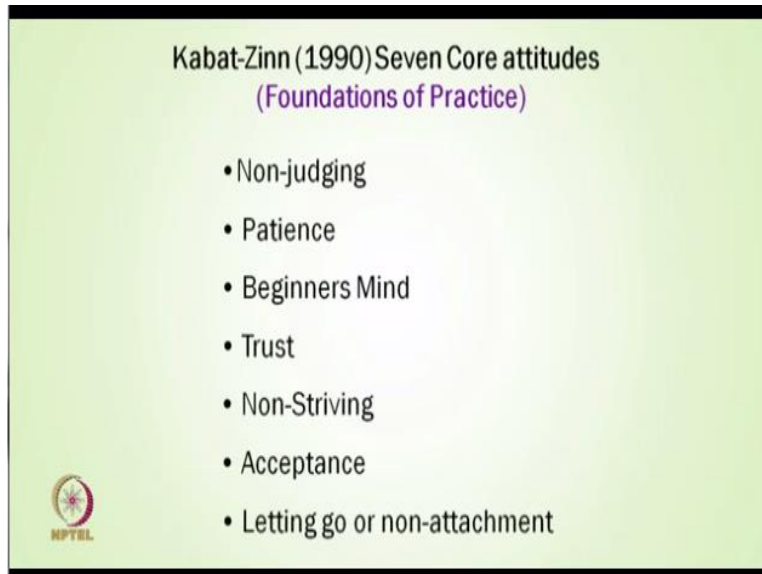
### Mindfulness

“paying attention in a particular way; On purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally” (Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1994, pg4).

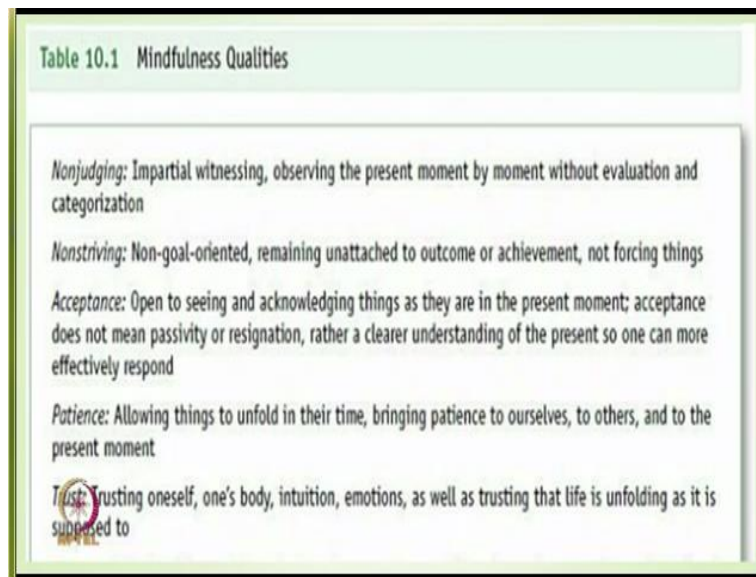
So broadly mindfulness is paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. It means intention, attention and attitude. These are 3 main factors of mindfulness.

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Kabat-Zinn in 1990 offered 7 core attitudes and he called them foundations of mindfulness practice. These are non-judging, patience, beginners mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, letting go or non-attachment.

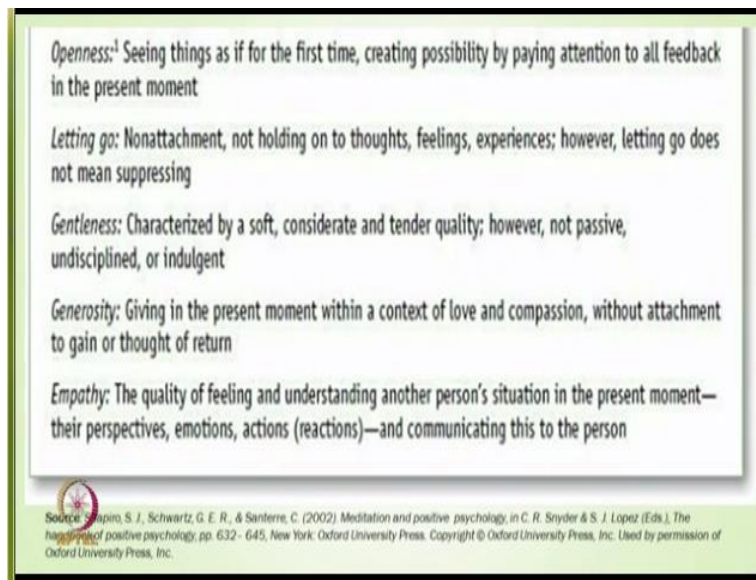
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Let us know what these 7 mindfulness qualities are, first is non-judging, non-judging means impartial witnessing, observing the present moment by moment without evaluation and categorization. So not judging is there. Second quality is non-striving, non-goal oriented, remaining unattached to outcome or achievement, not forcing things. Third quality is acceptance, open to seeing and acknowledging things as they are in the present moment.

Acceptance does not mean passivity or resignation rather a clearer understanding of the present, so one can more effectively respond. Next quality is patience, allowing things to unfold in their time, bringing patience to ourselves to others and to the present moment. Next quality trust, trusting oneself, one's body, intuitions, emotions as well as trusting that life is unfolding as it is supposed to.

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Next quality is openness, seeing things as if for the first-time, creating possibility by paying attention to all feedback in the present moment. So, openness to experiences, next quality is letting go, non-attachment, not holding onto thoughts, feelings, experiences however letting go does not mean suppressing, just let them go. Next quality is gentleness, characterized by a soft considerate and tender quality however not passive, undisciplined or indulgent.

Generosity, living in the present moment within a context of love and compassion without attachment to gain or thought of return. Empathy, the quality of feeling and understanding another person's situation in the present moment, their perspectives, emotions, actions, reactions and communicating this to the person. So how you manage your emotions thoughts and other processes as well as your way of handling others or it is focusing more on inter as well as intrapersonal processes when you are dealing with others. Then gentleness, generosity, empathy and you know ability to understand other people.

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**Mindlessness**

- When we are **mindless**, we are trapped in rigid mind-sets, oblivious (unaware) to context or perspective.
- When we are mindless, our behavior is governed by **rules and routine**.
- Mindlessness may come about on a **single exposure to information**. The context has changed, but our behavior remains the same, (**habitual responses**).
- Mindlessness comes about in two ways: either **through repetition** or on a **single exposure** to information (**low motivation**).
- It is contrasted with states of mind in which **attention is focused elsewhere** e.g. **pre-occupation with memories, fantasies, plans or worries, and behaving automatically without awareness of one's actions**.

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As well as are not indulged with your thoughts, emotions and other processes. For understanding mindfulness let us understand mindlessness also. Because mindlessness is just opposite to mindfulness and that is why by understanding mindlessness to some extent we can understand mindfulness in better way. When we are mindless, we are trapped in rigid mindsets, oblivious or unaware to context or perspective.

So, we have some habitual reactions and we are not noticing change in context or in perspective. When we are mindless our behavior is governed by rules and routines, we are not taking into account context and perspective just these rules and routines are governing us. Mindlessness may come about on a single exposure to information, the context has changed but our behavior **remains the same**.

Because we have habitual responses and we are not noticing changes in this context as well as in perspective. Mindlessness comes about in 2 ways either through repetition or on a single exposure to information. Because we have very low motivation that is why we are not considering other factors and we are not open minded in this situation. It is contrasted with state of mind in which attention is focused elsewhere - preoccupation with memories, fantasies, plans or worries.

And behaving automatically without awareness of one's actions we have. So, we are not focusing on the present and that is why we are preoccupied by memories, fantasies, plans, worries and responding as per all those background happenings in our life.

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Consider **three** different perspectives about bad things:

- (a) bad things are intolerable;
- (b) bad things happen, but if we just hold on, they will pass; and
- (c) bad things are context-dependent – shift the context, and the evaluation changes.

► **The Multiple Meanings of Behavior :**  
(DUE to MINDLESSNESS - BEHAVIOURAL ERRORS/attribution ERRORS )

► **Fundamental attribution error:** The tendency to **explain others` actions** as stemming from dispositions, even in the presence of **clear** situational causes.

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Consider 3 different perspectives about bad things and different people have different perspectives for the bad things. For example, first perspective could be bad things are intolerable, second bad things happen but if we just hold on, they will pass, and third bad things are context dependent, shift the context and the evaluation changes. So, say bad things defined differently by different people and this is difference between mindfulness and mindlessness.

Some of us may follow mindfulness style, others may follow mindlessness style. During mindlessness we may do number of errors and some errors are well stabilizing psychology as well as in social psychology. Like multiple meaning of behaviors, we may have due to mindlessness behavioral errors we may have, attribution errors we may have. These errors are like fundamental attribution error.

Fundamental attribution error, the tendency to explain others actions as stemming from dispositions even in the presence of clear situation causes. Sometimes we know bad happening or mainly something not per expectations is due to situational factors but still we blame others that is our tendency called attribution error.



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- ▶ **Actor-observer differences:** The tendency to attribute our own behaviour mainly to situational causes but the behaviour of others mainly to internal (dispositional) causes.
- ▶ **Self-serving bias:** The tendency to attribute positive outcomes to internal causes but negative outcomes to external causes.
- ▶ **Regrets (due to mindlessness):** It happens under two conditions: i) when we undertook some action, and ii) when we evaluate the action we undertook. Regret is a prediction of our emotions: If we had chosen differently then, we would have been feeling better now.

Next error could be actor observer differences - the tendency to attribute our own behavior mainly to situational causes but the behavior of others mainly to internal or dispositional causes. So, if we think something as per expectations happened with us that was due to situational factors but if it is happening with others that is because of their nature because of their dispositions because of their traits.

So our perception when we are experiencing it and when others are experiencing things then we have different perceptions. Next bias is self serving bias, the tendency to attribute positive outcomes to internal causes but negative outcomes to external causes. If you got good marks then because of your hard work, if you could not get good marks then you could say because of various factors - Professor was not good, exam was not good, exam was lengthy or various other excuses you could count over there.


Next point here is regret, why do we have and they are saying that it is because of mindlessness, it happens under 2 conditions when we undertook some actions and when we evaluate the action we undertook. And there is difference between 2 and that is why right now we are regretting; regret is a prediction of our emotions. If we had chosen differently then we would have been feeling better now.

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- It is too easy for people to jump from “could have been,” to “should have been” and then there arises the problem of how could we have been **so stupid or incompetent** not to have done it that way in the first place.

**Blame and Forgiveness**

- “To err is human, to forgive divine.” Ask 10 people whether forgiveness is good or bad. All will probably tell you that it is good. Forgiveness is something to which we should aspire. Now ask 10 people if blame is good or bad. All will probably tell you that blame is bad.
- If we do not blame in the first place, there is nothing to forgive.



So it is too easy for people to jump from could have been to should have been and then there arises the problem of how could we have been so stupid or incompetent not to have done it that way in the first place. So now we regret about it and regret because during that period we were not mindful rather we had mindlessness. In this series our next point is how do we measure mindfulness that is very important to understand. How do we measure mindfulness because we have various statements and these statements are correlated with mindfulness.


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**How do we measure Mindfulness?**

Mindful Attention Awareness Scale: Dispositional mindfulness

Almost Always (1) Very Frequently (2) Somewhat Frequently (3) Somewhat Infrequently (4) Very Infrequently (5) Almost Never (6)

- I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until some time later.
- I break or spill things because of carelessness, not paying attention, or thinking of something else.
- I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present.
- I tend to walk quickly to get where I'm going without paying attention to what I experience along the way.
- I tend not to notice feelings of physical tension or discomfort until they really grab my attention.
- I forget a person's name almost as soon as I've been told it for the first time.



And these statements are correlated with mindfulness, so once we know about these statements to some extent we could understand a little bit more about mindfulness. So let us take this example dispositional mindfulness scale and its questions and how these items or questions are

related to mindfulness as well as related to mindlessness. And studying level of mindfulness in our personality so it is dispositional mindfulness scale. It means it is studying our stable patterns in our behavior or traits in our behavior.

So read these statements one by one and then I will explain this psychological test. First item or question is I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until sometime later. Question number 2, I break or spill things because of carelessness not paying attention or thinking of something else. Third I find it difficult to stay focused on what is happening in the present.

Fourth I tend to walk quickly to get where I am going without paying attention to what I am experiencing along the way. Fifth I cannot notice feeling of physical tension or discomfort until they really grab my attention. Sixth question I forget a person's name almost as soon as I have been told it for the first time.

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7. It seems I am "running on automatic," without much awareness of what I'm doing.  
8. I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.  
9. I get so focused on the goal I want to achieve that I lose touch with what I'm doing right now to get there.  
10. I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I'm doing.  
11. I find myself listening to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time.  
12. I drive places on "automatic pilot" and then wonder why I went there.  
13. I find myself preoccupied with the future or the past.  
14. I find myself doing things without paying attention.  
15. I snack without being aware that I'm eating.

**Scoring:** To score the scale, simply compute a mean (average) of the 15 items. Higher score is higher level of mindfulness -- Almost Always (1) - Almost Never-6

© 2008 by James, K. W. & Ryan, R. M. (2008). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 94, 822-848.  
To score the scale, simply compute a mean of the 15 items. Higher scores reflect higher levels of dispositional mindfulness.

Next question it seems I am running on automatic without much awareness of what is I am doing, I rush through activities without being really attentive to them, I get so focused on the goal I want to achieve that I lost touch with what I am doing right now to get there. I do jobs and tasks automatically without being aware of what I am doing. Eleventh I find myself listening to someone with one ear doing something else at the same time.

I drive places on automatic pilot and then wonder why I went there, thirteen I find myself preoccupied with the future or the past, 14th I find myself doing things without paying attention, I snack without being aware what I am eating. After reading all these statements what do you think - are these questions related to mindfulness or related to mindlessness or mixture of both? Think about it.

All these items are related to mindlessness and that is why if person is saying almost never, he would be having high score it means he has high score of mindfulness. On the other hand if person is saying almost always then this person has low score on mindfulness because these questions are related to mindlessness. And person is saying almost always that is why he has low score on mindfulness and if he is saying almost never, he does not have such kind of characteristics in his personality.

That is why he has high level of mindfulness because all these statements are negative statements or leading to the lower level of mindfulness. So high score is higher level of mindfulness here and these questions are related to our definitions and that is why they have higher level of construct validity.

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The following are the underlying assumptions of this concept and approach (Mindfulness):

- (1) Humans are ordinarily largely unaware of their moment-to-moment experience, often operating in an "automatic pilot" mode.
- (2) We are capable of developing the ability to sustain attention to mental content.
- (3) Development of this ability is gradual, progressive and requires regular practice.
- (4) Moment-to-moment awareness of experience will provide a richer and more vital sense of life, inasmuch as experience becomes more vivid and active, mindful participation replaces unconscious reactivity.
- (5) Such persistent, non-evaluative observation of mental content will gradually give rise to greater reality of perceptions.
- and (6) because more accurate perception of one's own mental responses to external and internal stimuli is achieved, additional information is gathered that will enhance effective action in the world, and lead to a greater sense of control.

Next point here is the assumption of this concept and approach to mindfulness. So the following are the underlying assumptions of this concept and approach to mindfulness. Number 1 assumption is humans are ordinarily largely unaware of their moment-to moment experience often operating in an automatic pilot mode. So most of the time if we are not practicing anything then broadly we are in automatic pilot mode.

Second assumption is we are capable of developing the ability to sustain attention to mental content. So such kind of practices we could have and through those practices we can sustain our attention, third assumption is development of this ability is gradual, progressive and requires regular practices. So if we are doing regular practices we could gradually and progressively involve such kind of processes in our personality.

Fourth approach is moment to moment awareness of experience will provide a richer and more vital sense of life in as much as experience becomes more vivid and active, mindful participation replaces unconscious reactivity. Next such persistent non evaluative observation of mental content will gradually give rise to greater reality of perception. So we will be having greater or real perception not delusion or not hallucination or some other things. But our perception is quite close to reality.

And 6th one because more accurate perception of one's mental responses to external and internal stimuli is achieved, additional information is gathered that will enhance effective action in the world and lead to greater sense of control.

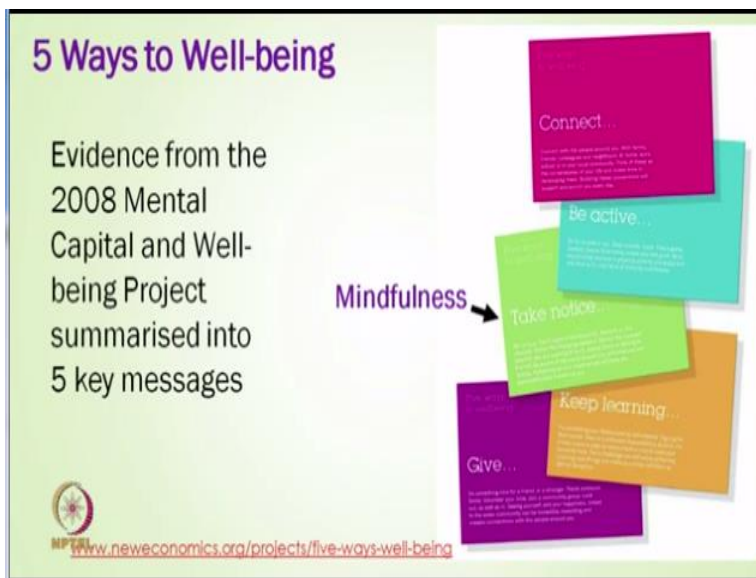
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Now next point is after knowing about mindfulness and mindlessness, how mindfulness is correlated with well-being, why we want to study mindfulness.

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Evidence from the 2008 mental capital and well being project summarized into 5 key messages and they have mentioned that these are 5 ways to well-being. Number 1 connect, 2 be active, 3rd take notice, keep learning and then give, so take notice is mindfulness and it contribute to well-being.

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**Mindfulness Meditation as a Buddhist Practice** – by Gil Fronsdal,  
2006

While mindfulness can be practiced quite well without Buddhism, Buddhism cannot be practiced without mindfulness. In its Buddhist context, mindfulness meditation has three overarching purposes: **knowing the mind; training the mind; and freeing the mind.**

**Learning mindfulness:** 'Formal' methods; Sitting meditation; Movement meditations; Group exchange 'Informal' methods; Acting mindfully; In situ exercises; Contemplations.



There are various mindfulness practices as well as meditation which is used in psychology to improve well-being. Mindfulness meditation as Buddhist practice has been used even in psychology for studying higher level of happiness as well as its benefits are not only psychological but physiological, even in brain studies we've observed benefits of mindfulness practices.

While mindfulness can be practiced quite well without Buddhism, Buddhism cannot be practiced without mindfulness, so it is a hallmark of Buddhism. In its Buddhist context, mindfulness meditation has 3 overarching purposes, know your mind, train your mind and freeing the mind. So, you learn different processes of your mind through mindfulness practices. There are various learning processes, learning mindfulness like formal methods are there, sitting meditation is there, movement meditation, group exchange informal methods, acting mindfully, in situ exercises, contemplations and there are various ways to learn mindfulness.

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**TABLE 4.1 Elements of Attitude in Mindfulness Meditation**

Nonjudging: Impartial witnessing, observing the present moment without evaluation and categorization.

Nonstriving: Non-goal-oriented, remaining unattached to outcome or achievement.

Nonattachment: Letting go of grasping and clinging to outcome, and allowing the process to simply unfold.

Acceptance: Seeing and acknowledging things as they are in the present moment.

Patience: Allowing things to unfold in their time.

Trust: Developing a basic trust in your experience.

Openness (Beginner's Mind\*): Seeing things freshly, as if for the first time.

Curiosity: A spirit of interest, investigation, and exploration.

Psychologists have also highlighted the elements of attitude in mindfulness, these attitudes are for example number 1 non-judging, impartial witnessing observing the present moment without evaluation and characterization. Second non-striving, non-goal oriented, remaining unattached to outcome or achievement. Non-attachment is third one. Letting go of, grasping and clinging to outcome and allowing the process to simply unfold.

Acceptance, seeing and acknowledging things as they are in the present moment, patience, allowing things to unfold in their time. Trust, developing a basic trust in your experience, openness or beginner's mind, seeing things freshly as if for the first time, curiosity, a spirit of interest, investigation and exploration.

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Letting go: Nonattachment, non holding on to thoughts, feelings, experience.

Gentleness: A soft, considerate and tender quality; however, not passive, undisciplined or indulgent.

Nonreactivity: Ability to respond with consciousness and clarity instead of automatically reacting in a habitual, and conditioned way.


Loving-kindness: A quality embodying friendliness, benevolence and love.

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NOTE: These categories are offered heuristically, reflecting the general rule that there are specific attitudes that modulate attention during the practice of mindfulness.

\* see: *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* by S. Suzuki, Shambala Press.

SOURCE: From Shapiro, S. & Carlson, L., *The Art and Science of Mindfulness: Integrating Mindfulness into Psychology and the Helping Professions* (page 11).  
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Letting go, non-attachment, not holding on to the thought's, feelings and experience. Gentleness, a soft considerate and tender quality however not passive undisciplined or indulgent. Nonreactivity, ability to respond with consciousness and clarity instead of automatically reacting in a habitual and conditional way. Loving kindness, a quality embodying friendliness, benevolence and love. So, these are certain elements of attitudes which we use during mindfulness meditation.


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**Key Mindfulness Interventions:**

- Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, MBSR by Kabat-Zinn (1982)
- Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, MBCT by Segal, Williams & Teasdale, (2002)
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, ACT by Hayes et al., (1999).

**Mindfulness increases:**

- Positive mental states
- Self-regulated behaviours
- Heightened self-knowledge (Brown et al., 2003)
- Enhances self-awareness
- Self understanding which allows choices in alignment with values and intrinsic motivations. (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005)

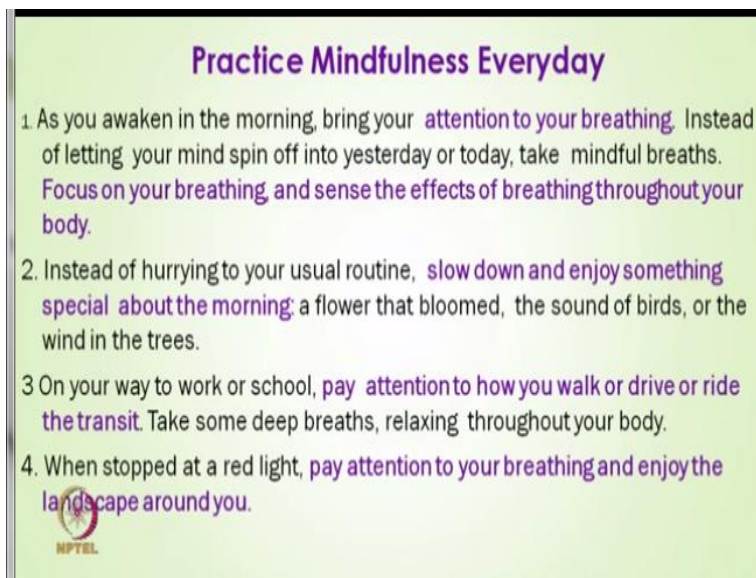


Now next point is how do we use mindfulness in intervention programs, there are various therapies, counseling sessions as well as intervention programs where they have used mindfulness practices. For example, MBSR, mindfulness-based stress reduction technique,

another one is mindfulness based cognitive therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy. So, like that there are various scholars who have used mindfulness practices in counseling sessions, in psychotherapeutic sessions as well as in modern positive psychology, in intervention sessions.

Because mindfulness increases positive mental states, self-regulated behaviors, heightened self knowledge as well as enhances self awareness, self understanding which allows choices in alignment with values and intrinsic motivations. Along with these benefits there are various other scholars who have highlighted benefits of mindfulness meditation. There are some scholars who just focused on how we can practice mindfulness in everyday life.

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**Practice Mindfulness Everyday**

1. As you awaken in the morning, bring your **attention to your breathing**. Instead of letting your mind spin off into yesterday or today, take mindful breaths. **Focus on your breathing, and sense the effects of breathing throughout your body.**
2. Instead of hurrying to your usual routine, **slow down and enjoy something special about the morning**: a flower that bloomed, the sound of birds, or the wind in the trees.
3. On your way to work or school, **pay attention to how you walk or drive or ride the transit**. Take some deep breaths, relaxing throughout your body.
4. When stopped at a red light, **pay attention to your breathing and enjoy the landscape around you.**

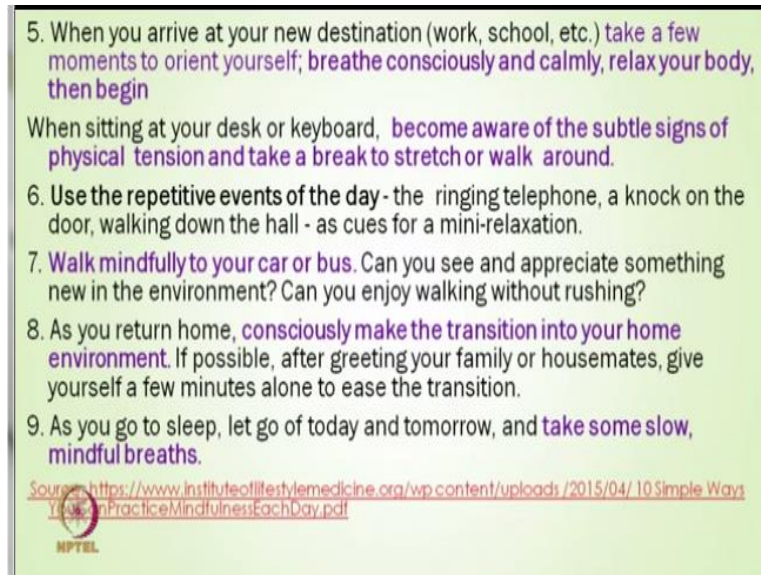
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And first of all, let us know what they are saying and after that why during these processes we have lesser level of stress and we are free from stresses during mindfulness practices. So, they are saying that practice mindfulness everyday by following these instructions. First is as you awaken in the morning bring your attention to your breathing instead of letting your mind spin off into yesterdays or today, take mindfulness breaths.

Focus on your breathing and sense the effect of breathing throughout your body, second is instead of hurrying to your usual routine, slow down and enjoy something special about the morning, a flower that bloomed, sound of birds or the wind in the trees. On your way to work or school pay attention to how you walk or drive or ride the transit, take some deep breaths, relax

throughout your body. When stopped at a red light, pay attention to your breathing and enjoy the landscapes around you.

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5. When you arrive at your new destination (work, school, etc.) take a few moments to orient yourself; breathe consciously and calmly, relax your body, then begin

When sitting at your desk or keyboard, become aware of the subtle signs of physical tension and take a break to stretch or walk around.

6. Use the repetitive events of the day - the ringing telephone, a knock on the door, walking down the hall - as cues for a mini-relaxation.

7. Walk mindfully to your car or bus. Can you see and appreciate something new in the environment? Can you enjoy walking without rushing?

8. As you return home, consciously make the transition into your home environment. If possible, after greeting your family or housemates, give yourself a few minutes alone to ease the transition.

9. As you go to sleep, let go of today and tomorrow, and take some slow, mindful breaths.

Source: <https://www.instituteoflifestylemedicine.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/10-Simple-Ways-to-Practice-Mindfulness-Each-Day.pdf>

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When you arrive at your new destination like work, school, take a few moments to orient yourself, breath consciously and calmly, relax your body then begin. When sitting at your desk or keyboard become aware of the subtle sign of physical tension and take a break to stretch or walk around. Use the repetitive events of the day, the ringing telephone, a knock on the door, walking down the hall as cues for a mini-relaxation.

Walk mindfully to your car or bus, can you see and appreciate something new in the environment, can you enjoy walking without rushing. So that is certain practice one should follow as you return home consciously make the transition into your home environment. If possible after greeting your family or housemates give yourself few minutes alone to ease the transition. As you go to sleep, let go of today and tomorrow and take some slow mindfulness breaths.

So, through all exercises if you have noticed during these processes you have shifted mind toward certain activities. The activities which are not tension creating activities, the activities which are not stress creating activities, which are not anxiety creating activities. So, once you learn to shift your mind towards neutral activities or the activities which are not creating anxiety,

stress, tension, then to some extent you trained your mind to go away from the stresses and this way mindfulness practices help us a lot.

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There are various applications of mindfulness. Like in the area of health - preventing depression, life styles etc. well-being like resilience stress reduction. It means if we practice mindfulness or mindfulness practices that we have, we may increase resilience or could reduce stress. Cognitive skills, attention, focus, memory improves due to mindfulness practices, self-regulation of emotions, interpersonal skills improved, communication, assertiveness, leadership qualities like decision making, perspective etc. Team development better when we practice mindfulness, awareness of others needs because we had after meditational practices or other mindfulness practices. So that way these are the applications

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## Ten Ways Mindfulness Meditation Promotes Well-Being by Bergland

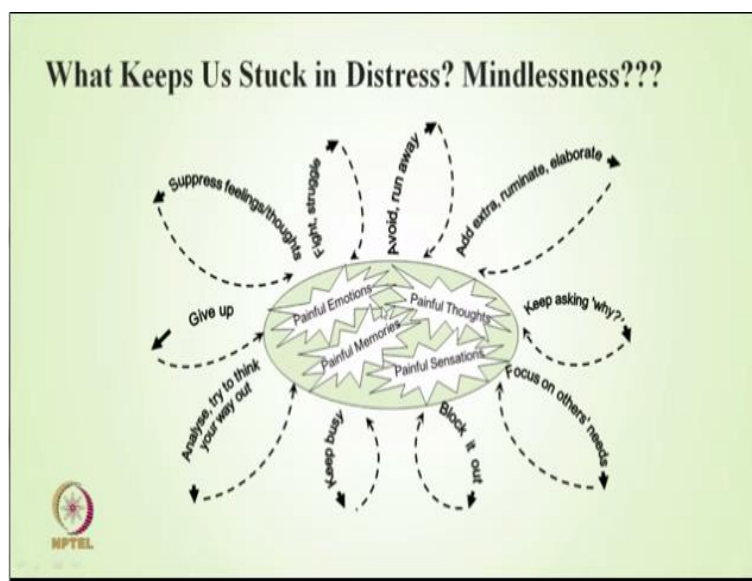
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/experts/christopher-berglund>

1. Enhance Brain Performance
2. Promote Creative Thinking
3. Alleviate Stress
4. Curtail Anxiety
5. Increase Compassion
6. Decrease Likelihood of Depression
7. Minimize Chronic Pain
8. Lower Risk of Heart Attack or Stroke
9. Help Cancer Recovery
10. Relieve Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

10 ways mindfulness meditation promotes well-being as per Bergland. He has highlighted on these 10 benefits and these 10 benefits improve our well-being, number 1 enhance brain performance, promote creative thinking, alleviate stress, curtail anxiety, increase compassion, decrease likelihood of depression, minimize chronic pain, lower risk of heart attack or stroke, help cancer recovery, relieve a post-traumatic stress disorders.

So, through researches it has been highlighted that these are the benefits along with various other documented benefits of mindfulness practices.

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On the other hand, when we talk about mindlessness then there could be various distress or stress creator factors. Because of all these stresses we may have painful emotions, painful memories, painful sensations, painful thoughts which are triggering our anxiety, tension, stress and that is why we experience negative emotions.

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**Being Mindful, Experiencing Flow**

- Instructions such as "live in the here and now" and "focus on the present moment" have been linked to the psychology of peak performance in sports (e.g., Jackson & Delehanty, 1995; Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Orlick, 1990; Ravizza, 2002).
- Being aware of, and accepting of our experience, and staying in the present, creates a mindset that facilitates flow.
- Creating an environment of appropriate challenge-skill balance, & tuning in to feedback, will enhance the potential for being mindful and experiencing flow.

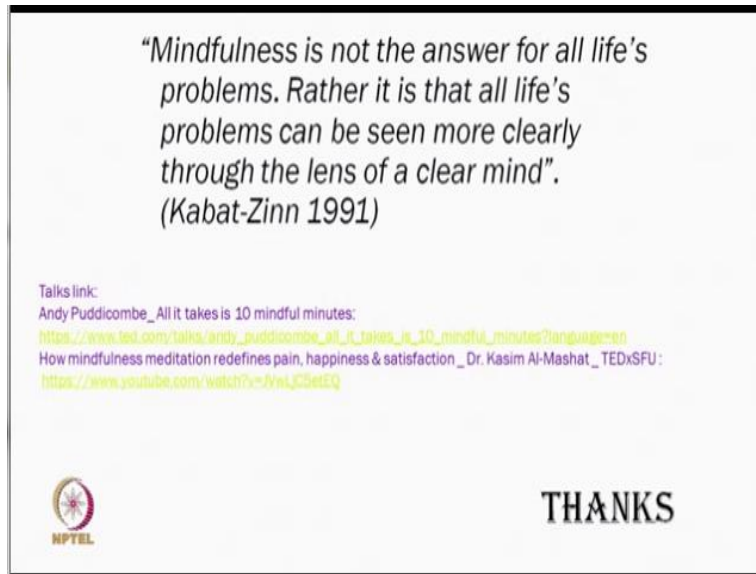
Mindfulness → Flow



Once again let us revisit being mindful, experiencing flow and how these 2 are correlated with each other. I think now you know what mindfulness is, that is why you can easily understand what is correlation between flow and mindfulness. And how when we are mindful, we experience high level of flow and I just copy pasted this slide once again from the flow slides. So, instructions such as live in the here and now or focus on the present moment.

Now you know that is mindfulness and these instructions helping us to experience high level of flow. On the other hand, being aware of and accepting of our experience, staying in the present - again that is relative to mindfulness and this mindset that facilitates flow and that is why both of them are highly correlated with each other. Creating an environment of appropriate challenge-skill balance and tuning into feedback will enhance the potential for being mindful. And experiencing flow and that is why mindfulness and flow are positively correlated with each other.

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As Kabat-Zinn 1991 stated that mindfulness is not the answer for all life's problems rather it is that all life's problems can be seen more clearly through the lens of a clear mind, that is mindfulness. So this is very important area in positive psychology as well as in psychology and now it is we do not have only psychological benefits documented in psychology but along with psychological, physiological as well as brain activities improved through mindfulness practices.

And that is why this is very important construct in positive psychology and we are doing number of researches as well as using mindfulness practices in counseling, in psychotherapies as well as some special intervention programs in positive psychology have been highlighted to test mindfulness practices in modern psychology. I have selected here 2 ted talks one by Andy all it takes is 10 mindfulness minutes.

And second one is by Dr. Kasim - how mindfulness meditation defines pain, happiness and satisfaction. This is very interesting talk where he is talking about his experiences when he learns mindfulness practices and I hope you will enjoy these ted talks and will get message how we can redefine pain, happiness and satisfaction once we start to do mindfulness meditation, thank you very much.

**(Video Starts: 31:12)**

We live in an incredibly busy world, the pace of life is often frantic. Our minds are always busy and we are always doing something. So with that in mind, I would like just to take a moment to think when did you last take any time to do nothing, just 10 minutes, undisturbed. And when I say nothing, I do mean nothing. So that is no emailing, texting, no internet, no TV, no chatting, no eating, no reading, not even sitting there reminiscing about the past or planning for the future.

Simply doing nothing. I see a lot of very blank faces, thinking that they probably have to go a long way back. And this is an extraordinary thing, right? We are talking about our mind; the mind is most valuable and precious resource through which we experience every single moment of our life. The mind that we rely upon to be happy, content, emotionally stable as individuals and at the same time to be kind and thoughtful, and considerate in our relationships with others.

This is the same mind that we depend upon to be focused, creative, spontaneous, and to perform at our very best in everything that we do. And yet we do not take any time out to look after it. In fact, we spend more time looking after our cars, our clothes and our hair than we okay, maybe not our hair, but you see what I am going to the result of courses that we get stressed, you know, the mind whizzes away like a washing machine going round and round, not a difficult, confusing emotions.

And we do not really kind of know how to deal with that. And the sad fact is that we are so distracted that we are no longer present in the world in which we live. We miss out on the things that are most important to us. And the crazy thing is that everybody just assumes, well, that is the way life is. So, we just kind of got to get on with it. That is really not how it has to be. So, I was about 11 when I went along to my first meditation class.

And trust me, I had all the stereotypes that you can imagine sitting cross legged on the floor, the incense, the herbal tea, the vegetarians, the whole deal, but my mom was going and I was intrigued. So, I went along with her, I had also seen a few kung fu movies and secretly I kind of thought I might be able to learn how to fly but I was very young at the time, you know. Now, as I was there, you know, I guess like a lot of people I assumed that it was just an aspirin for the mind, you get stretched to do some meditation.

And really thought that it can be sort of preventative in nature. And so those of us were 20 when a number of things happened in my life in quite quick succession, really serious things which just flipped my life upside down. And all of a sudden, I was inundated with thoughts, inundated with difficult emotions that I did not know how to cope with every time I sort of pushed one down, another one would just sort of pop back up again.

**It was a really very stressful time.** I guess we all deal with stress in different ways. Some people will bury themselves in work grateful for the distraction, others will turn to their friends and family looking for support. Some people hit the bottle, start taking medication. My own way of dealing with it was to become a monk. So I quit my degree. I headed off to the Himalayas. I became a monk and I started studying meditation. People often ask me, you know what I learned from that time, well, obviously, it is things, you know, let us face it, becoming a celibate monk is going to change a number of things.

But it was more than that, you know it taught me. It gave me a greater appreciation and understanding for the present moment. By that I mean, not being lost in thought, not being distracted, not being overwhelmed by difficult emotions, but instead learning how to be in the here and now, how to be mindful, how to be present. In the present moment is so underrated, sounds so ordinary.

And yet we spend so little time in the present moment that is anything but ordinary. There was a research paper that came out of Harvard just recently that said, on average, our minds are lost in thought, almost 47% of the time, 47%! At the same time this sort of constant mind-wandering is also a direct cause of unhappiness. Now we are not here for that long anyway. But to spend almost half of our life lost in thought, and potentially quite unhappy.

The note just kind of seems tragic, actually, especially when there is something we can do about it. When there is a positive, practical, achievable, scientifically proven technique, which allows our mind to be more healthy, to be more mindful, and less distracted. And the beauty of it is that

even though it kind of needs only take about 10 minutes a day, it impacts our entire life. But we need to know how to do it.

We need an exercise, we need a framework to learn how to be more mindful, that is essentially what meditation is. It is familiarizing yourself with the present moment, but we also need to know how to approach it in the right way to get the best from it. And that is what these are for, in case you have been wondering because most people assume that meditation is all about sort of stopping thoughts, getting rid of emotions, somehow controlling the mind but actually its quite different from that.

It is more about sort of stepping back, sort of seeing the thought clearly, witnessing it coming and going, emotions coming and going without judgment, but with a relaxed, focused mind. So for example, right now, if I focus too much on the balls, then there is no way that I can relax and talk to you at the same time equally, if I relax too much talking to you, then there is no way I can focus on the balls, I am going to drop them.

Now in life and in meditation, there will be times when the focus becomes a little bit too intense, and life starts to feel a bit like this. It is very uncomfortable way to live life when we get this tight and stressed. And other times we might take our foot off the gas a little bit too much. And things just become a bit like this. And, of course in meditation, we can end up falling asleep. So we're looking for a balance of focus and relaxation where we can allow thoughts to come and go without all the usual involvement.

Now, what usually happens when we are learning to be mindful is that we get distracted by thoughts, let us say this is an anxious thought. So, everything is going fine. And then we see the anxious thought. And it is like, Oh, I did not realize I was worried about that. You go back to it, repeat it. Oh, I am worried. I am worried. I am worried. Wow, there is so much anxiety. And before we know it, right, we are anxious about feeling anxious.

You know, this is crazy. We do this all the time, even on an everyday kind of level. If you think about the last time, I know you had a wobbly tooth. You know, it is wobbly. And you know that



it hurts. But what do you do every 20 30 seconds uahhh ahhhh ahhh that is all. And we reinforce the storyline right, and we just keep telling ourselves, and we do it all the time. And it is only in learning to watch the mind in this way that we can start to let go those storylines and patterns of mind.

But when you sit down and you watch the mind in this way, you might see many different patterns you might find a mind that is really sort of restless and the whole time, you know. Do not be surprised if you feel a bit agitated in your body, when you sit down to do nothing, and your mind feels like that. You might find the mind is very sort of dull and boring.

And it is just almost mechanical - the soul seems as if you are just getting up going to work, eat, sleep, get up or it might just be that one little nagging thought it just goes round, and round, and round your mind. Whatever it is, meditation offers the opportunity, the potential to step back and to get a different perspective to see that things are not always as they appear. You know, we can't change every little thing that happens to us in life.

But we can change the way that we can experience it. That is the potential of meditation and mindfulness. You do not have to burn any incense. And you definitely do not have to sit on the floor. All you need to do is to take 10 minutes out a day, to step back, to familiarize yourself with the present moment, so that you get to experience a greater sense of focus, calm and clarity in your life. Thank you very much.

So, I am here to speak about the elephant in the room. I know, but it is fear for all of us in one form or another. It is this dissatisfaction and unhappiness with what we have in our lives. So maybe if you are here or watching this, you have all the basics covered -food, water, safety shelter. But somehow, we long for something more. As a psychologist, I have really seen how we all want to be happy, but keep chasing it in the future. And I know about myself really well because I had everything in life. Love, support, education, career but was not enough. And that really frustrated me. And eventually, I discovered the real obvious reason. It is really obvious. It is our mind. It really gets distracted and lost and negatives and has a difficult time being right

here in the present moment. What helped me see that was mindfulness meditation. I came across it into research in my field and started using it with clients.

And that took me on a personal journey, which eventually led me to this ridiculous gut feeling that I had to do, which is drop everything in my life and go to a 6-month meditation retreat in Southeast Asia, in a forest monastery in silence. I tell you it was the most difficult, unpleasant, painful 6 months of my life. But it really taught me profound lessons that has inspired me to be here today.

So, I am here to really share with you my personal insights and professional understanding of mindfulness meditation with the hope that you give it a chance. So, you can see for yourself how it can redefine the way we approach happiness, satisfaction and reduce the suffering and our lives from the pain that is already there okay, so back to some not so good news about our mind. It has the tendency for a negativity bias, or evolutionary psychologists refer to it as a survival mechanism.

So, there is a bunny in the bushes and their sounds, our mind is ready with a stress response for a fight or flight response. I did it backwards actually. Fight or flight response, back is actually flight response. Even if there is just a bunny, we are getting ready for tiger and neuropsychologists refer to that as our brain being like Velcro to the negatives, latches on to negatives. Anyone familiar with that, just hang on, and being like Teflon fabric to the positives, letting a law slip away.

Okay, so it is not all bad news. With the advances in neuroscience, mindfulness meditation has been shown to change the structure of our brain. And you do not have to do a 6-month retreat in a forestry. That is good news. Even in 8th weeks mindfulness programs, practicing 40-45 minutes a day, you can improve concentration, decision making, compassion, and life satisfaction. So, what exactly is mindfulness meditation.

It is one form of meditation. And basically, it is training the brain to be present. It is based on thousands of years of wisdom, tradition, nature. And how we do it? One way is we place our

attention on the belly to watch our breath. But we do that in a particular way or as Jon Kabat Zinn who brought mindfulness to medicine, which is quite big, actually. He defines it in 4 words, we pay attention, and on purpose, so with an intention, and in the present moment, so right now, and the hardest part for all of us, non judgmentally, really tough. So, let us say, this is our attention. We place it right on the belly. Guess what is going to happen with our mind? We are going to get distracted, but without pushing against the facts or hating the thoughts or clinging on to them, good or bad, right back. Now you can get a sense of that too.

You, like now if you would like to join me by placing your hand on the belly and we are just going to observe two breaths. Natural inhale, natural exhale, even slightly. Inhale, exhale. Inhale, exhale. Okay. Now, when we do that, and some of you may have noticed that there will be thoughts, or emotions, or sensations, but we do not get lost in them. We bring our attention back. And every time we do that, guess what we are doing to our brain.

Strengthening the muscles in the brain every time. It is a gym workout for the brain. And in the process of doing that patiently, I mean, it takes a lot of patience, and compassionately we learn to work with our mind and be present with whatever is here. Now we do not have to like what is here. When I first arrived at the forest monastery, I asked the monk saying is it true there are poisonous snakes on the compound? He said yes, yes, deadly, deadly - just stay away from them. Walk mindfully, and use a flashlight at night.

And I love this one - to check your meditation cushion before you sit on it. I mean I could have died that was, you know, possibility. But the best part he said send them love. They were here before us. Okay, Mr. Monk, I was not ready for it yet.

So, I did not notice even before we were going to some retreat, I noticed some changes in my mind and how I reacted just from daily meditation. One day I was stuck in a traffic jam really early in the morning 5:40 am on the way to the gym, unexpected. And instead of the usual why are these people moving, get uptight, agitated, and the mind going into this is going to be a horrible day I am late for stuff. What surprised me is what I heard. Interesting, I thought, I hope no one's hurt. Maybe there is an accident or maybe its construction workers were up all night.

And I started wishing them well. May they be safe today. Now, I still was late. So that did not change. But I did not spiral into the negativity of the mind and really showed me we are working that muscle, the daily practice. So, let us put together what I shared so far with a little illustration. Imagine this pain could be anything. Let us just say stomach pain. Signals travel to the brain.

If you imagine this is our brain or mind when it is relatively calm. We now have a signal of pain. But it does not stop there. We are not usually loving to it. We hate it, and we get agitated and wish it was not there. And then when we do, we let negativity leak for rest our mind, why me, why is this happening and then we stir it all up with negativity. What kind of horrible thing this is, we worry and instead of being present with the pain we get taken for a ride in our mind.

I know that really well. Because I experienced that deeply in this forest retreat. You see the honeymoon phase of fulfilling my dream, meditating for so long ahhh ahhh. That ended after the first night. You know everything that brought me happiness or I thought brought me happiness was pull from under my legs. People I love, there is no technology, no social media, no internet.

Just seclusion and deprivation and there was a wakeup call in the morning 3 am every day, but was not this nice type of thing as in castles. No, it was not bad it was boom boom boom every morning startled me which would begin our 13-14 hours of daily meditation in the heat of lovely insects, scorpions, yes scorpion. Actually, someone got stung by one as the sound of theirs suggested when I was there.

So, and sleeping on this lovely wooden bed with just a little bit of foam, daily hunger because last meal of a day, guess what, lunch and when 10:30 in the morning, it was in reality. So, whenever my mind got stirred up in any of that pain, it was crushing. I felt trapped. I actually woke up one night, screaming from it all. And really saw how when we begin to fight and resist our reality, it gets worse.

Things began to change for me when I just started to look at pain as pain. And so, so clearly that it was my mind that was creating the suffering, which is optional. Wow. All I have to do is just

be in this moment. And mindfulness assured me we can be in the eye of the storm. Watch it all pass moment by moment. And there's such freedom and trusting in permanent way and then really holding our pain with great compassion because it is painful already.

You do not need to hate it more. Just be with it, you know. As psychiatrist Victor Frankl said, choice is the last human freedom – 'choice'. I learned that, using mindfulness as a choice. And even when all my freedoms felt like they were taken away, I experienced freedom right here. And my biggest, biggest epiphany is happiness and satisfaction are none of the distant future or when I go back home, it is actually available for all of us in every moment.

It blooms naturally from a state of mind that is calm, not agitated and peaceful. So I want to leave you with this this acronym but it captures some of my learnings and I hope you use it when you find yourself lost in any kind of suffering and lost is the first letter - 'L' just know you're lost and suffering and let thoughts come back to the present moment.

'O', offer loving kindness you do not have to like the pain, just hold it, have compassion. See and smile. See pain as pain or joy as joy without the added agitation on the mind and smile knowing you just did that. And 'T' for take a deep breath, knowing you are not alone, we are all dealing with the condition of the mind. So, I invite you to join me in taking a deep breath into the nose and exhale.

So, to sum up, if we do not retrain the brain, it can cause added pain and retraining can be with mindfulness meditation. It is not a quick fix, with magical results, nor is it going to make us immune to the challenges in life. But imagine, imagine if half of us created a daily meditation practice to be more present in life with the good and the bad, offer more compassion and feel more moments of satisfaction and happiness and let that bloom naturally from a state of mind that is more peaceful. That is a recipe for a positive change and it can start with you. Thank you.

**(Video Ends: 56:18)**