

EXPERIENCING NATURAL EASE



ONE DAY MINDFULNESS & MEDITATION RETREAT



www.mindfulnessworks.co.nz

MINDFULNESS IS ABOUT...

- Being here, now
- Being open to our present moment experience
- Being OK with whatever is arising
- Not judging
- Listening, watching, observing, feeling
- Letting go and letting be
- Deepening in to the present moment
- Becoming intimate with ourselves
- Arriving home
- Paying attention
- Being simple, being real

MINDFULNESS WORKS BEST WHEN WE...

- Are open to learning and seeing
- When we are curious and genuinely interested in our experience
- If we can be as non-judgmental as possible
- Open to seeing what is getting in the way of us being happy, relaxed or at ease
- When we take time to practise regularly

HAPPINESS AND NATURAL EASE

Everyone just wants to be....



HAPPY

BUT...

We chase happiness,
relaxation, peace and ease
as if it will occur in the
future – when we get
something

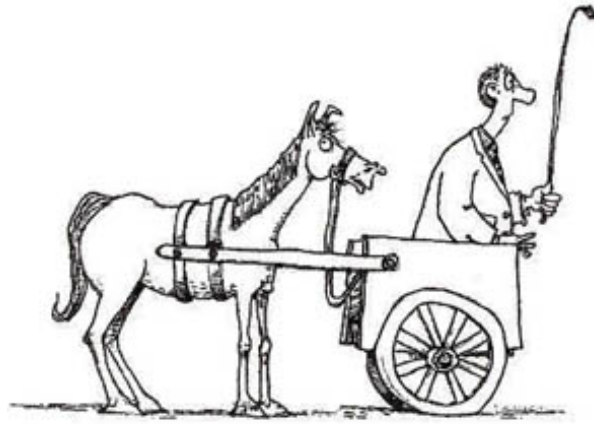


AND... THIS BECOMES STRESSFUL....



So we try harder. Which is
even more stressful and
makes us feel trapped

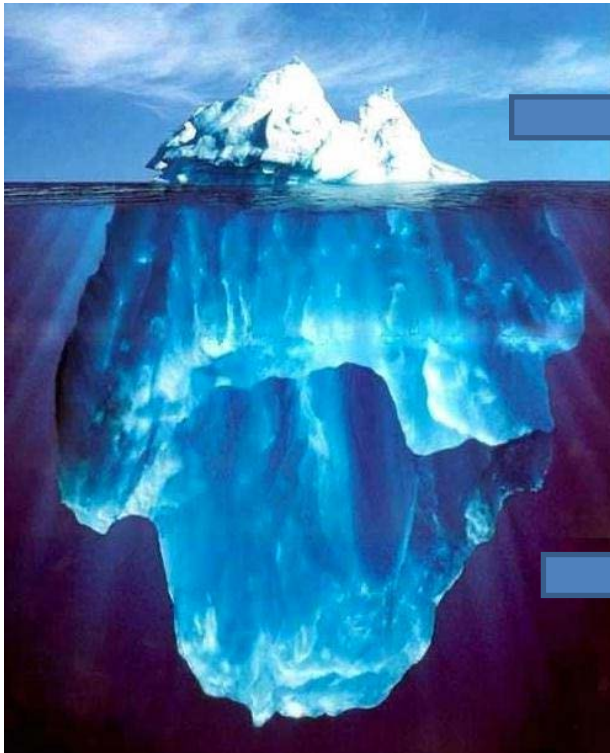
By seeking happiness at some future point, we put the cart before the horse.



Mindfulness is about seeing what gets in the way of our natural ease – right here, right now.

It's about feeling our happiness – right here, right now.

MAKING THE UNCONSCIOUS CONSCIOUS



Unhappiness: Pressure, stress, tension. This appears on the surface.

What's really going on lies beneath:

- Our beliefs, stories, patterns, conditioning
- What we are afraid of
- What we really feel

Mindfulness increases our awareness of what is really going on, what lies beneath the surface.

As we feel more of this and accept it we feel more complete and whole.

To do this we need to be aware of it in the first place.

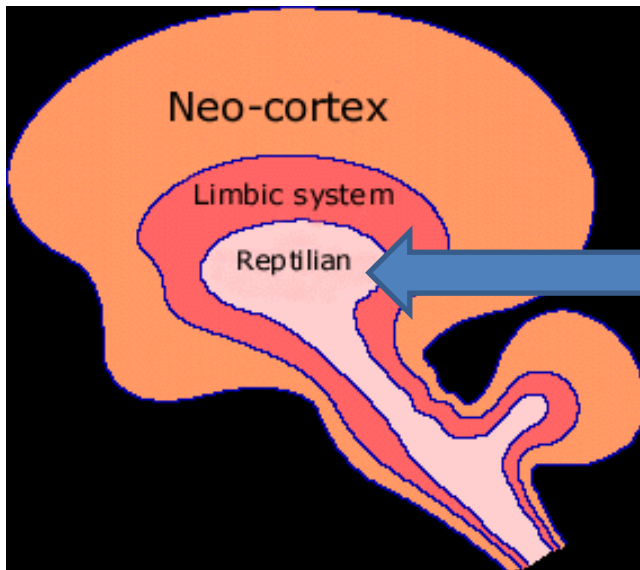
AWARENESS CREATES A MIRROR

Awareness creates a mirror. When we watch our reactions, we start to see what is actually causing our stress and agitation. When we start to see this we can address the actual causes and we can start to choose more consciously how we respond to life, ourselves and others.

When we are mindful, we also start to notice the moments when we feel free, at peace and at ease. We start to notice how this peace and ease is closer to our natural state, what is normal for us. We become more relaxed, fluid, open and self-accepting. We notice that this feels REALLY good.

We start to become our own teacher and learn how to live in a way that is more meaningful, fulfilling, easeful and wise. We become intimate with life, with others and most importantly with ourselves.

DISARMING FIGHT OR FLIGHT

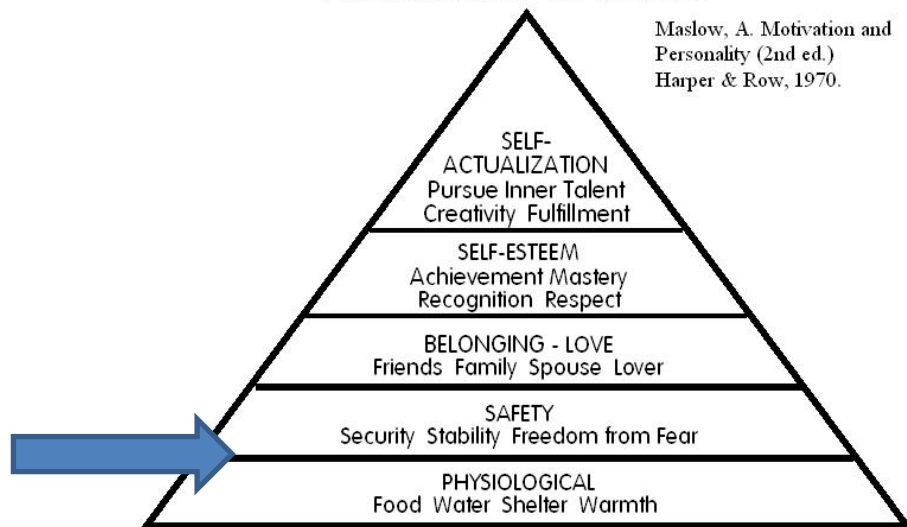


The “amygdala” is one of the oldest parts of our brain. We are wired and conditioned to be on the look-out for threats to our survival. When we feel threatened the amygdala is activated with a fight or flight response.

Whilst we feel under threat we can't experience love, belonging, realise our potential and have a sense of belonging, fulfilment and natural ease.

ABRAHAM MASLOW HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Maslow, A. *Motivation and Personality* (2nd ed.)
Harper & Row, 1970.



We can be afraid of the dark corners when we don't know what is there...



When we shine the light in the room, we find that



There is nothing to fear.

NATURAL EASE AND RADICAL ACCEPTANCE

What if absolutely everything was OK? What if you were OK, your friends were OK, other people were OK, your life was OK and the world was OK? What if it were truly the case? What would that be like for you?

When we start to pay close attention to our moment to moment experience, something truly amazing happens.

We start to see that life as it happens, as it is (including us) is actually completely OK. It is not always pleasant and it can often be painful, but there are also moments of joy, laughter and authentic happiness. It seems like you can't have one without the other. It's just the way it is.

Mindfulness is a truth-revealing process. We start to experience ourselves and life as it actually is, as things are. When we do so we start to accept things (and us and others) completely as we and they are. We have a sense that things are the way they are and we can't change it. We surrender more and more to the truth of how things are instead of resisting or fighting against it.

In this surrender we realise that actually how things are is 100% OK. We see that it simply can't be any other way. We embark on a journey of radical acceptance – accepting our emotions, our life, things going well, things not going well, strengths, weaknesses, things we are ashamed of, aspects we hide from others – the full monty.

THE GUEST HOUSE- RUMI

Translated By Coleman Barks

*This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.*

*A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.*

*Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.*

*The dark thought, the shame, the malice.
meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.*

*Be grateful for whatever comes.
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.*

RAIN - WORKING WITH DIFFICULT THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

Often when we experience difficult thoughts and feelings we try and run away, distract ourselves, ignore them or try and fix them or ourselves. Unfortunately all these strategies end up doing is just covering up, ignoring or supressing what is actually going on for us. What we find though is that by ignoring or covering up what is actually going on or even trying to 'fix it' we end up feeling even more stressed, depressed and alone or a 'failure'.

Even if we do manage to feel better for a short time by ignoring painful thoughts or feelings, they inevitably come up again in the future. Often they are stronger and more frequent than before. This then reinforces the feelings of failing, isolation and hopelessness as our strategies don't ever seem to work. This cycle can easily lead to addictive or self-harming behaviours as our methods to try and cope with the seemingly unsolvable stress, difficult thoughts and emotions becomes more extreme.

When we practise mindfulness we don't avoid, fix, supress or ignore. In fact we do exactly the opposite. We invite the difficult thoughts and feelings in and we pay attention. We allow ourselves as much as possible to simply be with the difficult thoughts or feelings. We don't push them away or try and fix or supress them. We feel the emotion, we observe the thoughts.

We allow the feelings or thoughts to move through in a very natural way. We then notice that the feelings seem to go away or pass of their own accord. We see that we don't need to continue to try and think our way out of a problem or fix anything. In many cases, we get a new perspective on what we considered to be a problem and find that it either isn't a problem at all now, or that it is greatly reduced.

Over time the difficult thoughts and emotions seem to lose their force in terms of making us feel bad. We see that in many if not all cases, it is actually our resistance to the emotions and thoughts that is causing a lot of the painful and stressful feelings

As a support for focussing on investigating these feelings and thoughts it can be useful to use the RAIN approach. RAIN stands for...

R = Recognise – Identify the feeling that you are experiencing. See if you can put a name to it. Be curious – what is the flavour of the emotion - are you feeling angry, sad, guilty, anxious, and fearful? If you can't identify the emotion, simply describe it in terms of being unpleasant, uncomfortable, contracted painful etc. By recognising and naming the feeling, there is less identification with the emotion and more awareness. Awareness creates perspective.

A = Accept – See if you can actually allow yourself to feel and accept the emotion or feeling even if the feelings are difficult, painful or there is some thought that you ‘shouldn’t be feeling that way’ or that the particular emotion is ‘bad’. Allow yourself to feel what you are feeling. Give yourself permission that it is OK to feel this – no matter what! If there is resistance to accepting the emotion or thought, just allow or accept the resistance.

I = Investigate. See if you can be curious about the feelings or thoughts. What do you notice about the feeling – is it intense, shallow, does it affect your body, what seems to make it stronger, do you like it, not like it, does it change, what thoughts are associated with it? What do you feel? What do you observe? What do you notice?

N = Non-Identification. As you become more interested in the feeling and allow its full expression there is a release from actually identifying with the feeling. You have more perspective and can allow the thoughts and emotions to come and go of their own accord. There is a holding that emerges. Instead of seeing yourself as an angry, guilty, shameful or fearful person or that there is something ‘wrong’ with you, you start to experience the emotions or thoughts as more impersonal – like weather patterns comes and goes of its own accord and is completely natural. Yes sometimes it can be pleasant, sometimes unpleasant.

Either way emotions and difficult thoughts are an integral part of being human, our experience of reality, just as the weather is – but just like the weather – it is not who we actually are. The emotional cycle is very natural movement, without any need for us to try and control, suppress, fix or ignore it.

Sometimes to foster this stage it can be helpful to ask yourself the following questions...

- Who is feeling this way?
- Watch as things (feelings, sensations) arise and pass
- Be deeply curious and observe
- Are you the observer or the phenomenon or both?



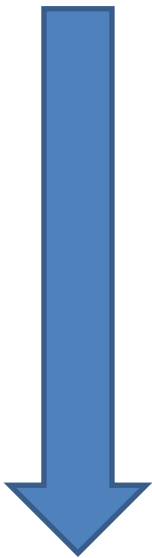
CULTIVATING PRESENCE AND DEPTH

Horizontal Movement

“Wanting something to be different, trying to get something, postponing happiness”



- *Has the quality of a superficial existence*
- *Creates busy-ness and stress*
- *Deeply unfulfilling*
- *Often fuelled by fear, scarcity and lack*
- *Often unconscious with little awareness*
- *Emotions acted out or suppressed rather than felt*
- *Narrow range of emotions*



Vertical Movement

“Stopping. Allowing. Being right here, right now. Acknowledging innate goodness.”

- *Has the quality of a meaningful existence and depth*
- *Deeply fulfilling*
- *High awareness and insight*
- *A full range of emotions experienced*
- *Creates natural ease and acceptance*
- *Emotions felt and acknowledged*
- *Fuelled by openness, courage, vulnerability and radical acceptance*

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES & BOOKS

Mindfulness & meditation retreats, courses and regular sessions:

www.mindfulnessworks.co.nz



Mindfulness articles and resources on the web:

www.mindful.org

www.mindfulnet.org

www.adyashanti.com

www.lifewithoutacentre.com

Books and Further Reading:

- Radical Acceptance: Tara Brach
- True Meditation: Adyashanti
- I Am That: Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj
- After the Ecstasy The Laundry: Jack Kornfield
- A Gradual Awakening: Stephen Levine
- Everyday Zen: Charlotte Joko Beck