

IS THE 'PRACTICE OF MINDFULNESS' A PASSING FAD OR HERE TO STAY?



Mindfulness as a practice is neither new or a trend. Rather it is something that has been around for a very long time and has been repackaged to broaden its appeal. It's just become mainstream. On a personal level and within the Corporate World. It's another way of being respectful, to ourselves and others. What it means to me, to you, to those around us can mean very different things. In the broadest sense it simply means being aware of what is happening around you now. Being aware of what surrounds you, the impact of your behaviour on yourself and others. Living deliberately and consciously like this helps us get more out of our lives and often build a better future. Yet, as everybody knows, it's easier said than done.

Now that said, as I recall when I was young.... we were brought up to be considerate, respectful and kind. Always to be on time. Not to interrupt. To say please and thank you. In fact, my dear dad used to say that you could get help with most things in life depending on how you asked. I soon learnt that help was indeed often available if only I could get over my fierce pride for our mother taught us to be independent, never dependent on anyone, so you can imagine the continuing journey of learning I have. A life which honours my values, the values which are my guiding principles for how I think and act. These values embody too the traits I most admire in others. Respect and Kindness feature high on my list and Mindfulness for me is based on respect, firstly for myself and for anything and everything that surrounds me. It keeps me grounded. Helps me focus on what's most important and rationalise irrational thoughts most of the time. Mindfulness is one of the hardest practices of all even though I know if my mind is busy thinking about a past incident that I can do nothing about and my time is best spent on the task in hand, something that I want or need to do now, something that will benefit me now and in the future, there's often a little devil in my head, taunting and teasing me, distracting me. But what exactly is mindfulness? In the last year, I've learnt a great deal on this from Roland Evans who

has MND and his wife Annette. Over the summer when my cottage was being re-built, I lived with them and saw mindfulness in full flow, every day. I asked them what the secret of their relationship was and in particular coping with MND. Acceptance they both replied, almost in unison. As we spoke more about what acceptance meant, a clearer picture emerged. It was acceptance of everything. Of all relationships, within the family, with friends and acquaintances. Not dwelling on what life was like before learning to live with MND, rather than waiting to die. Of being grateful for the day in hand. For the friendships, the daily kindnesses of others, the joy of sharing time with people, in conversation, in silent companionship of a pastime like painting or writing, of simply knowing that other people were around. Knowing that what was going on right here, right now, was the most important thing of all. Instead of wasting time in asking why, realising why not and getting on with making the most of every moment available. Is this not the ultimate embodiment of Mindfulness?



Being mindful, well it stops my mind zig-zagging around' said Annette. Roland feels it calms his mind and described his practice of mindfulness as a form of 'secular prayer'. In asking others, 'being mindful gives me sense of order, flow, a calmness which seemed to have a knock-on effect to other areas of my life.' Call me old fashioned, but the way I see it when you're with someone, is it not just good manners to give them your full attention, rather than only half listening because unconsciously or otherwise, you're busy thinking of what you want to add to the conversation? Is it not better for everyone to concentrate on what they're doing instead of multi-tasking all the time? The answer of course is yes. The key, it seems, to getting more out of everything in our lives is being aware of what we're doing and the impact of our thoughts and actions both on ourselves and others. Being clear about what it is we want, whilst being kind and polite in our communication. Treating others as we would like to be treated ourselves. The secret I feel lies in the word 'practice'. The regular practice of being aware, of being mindful, of consciously choosing to focus on what's going on in our lives now is what matters most. Some things do not change. Mindfulness is and always was, an essential part of life.

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