

Wroten & Associates

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Mindfulness: The Here and Now

"Wherever you are, be there totally. If you find your here and now intolerable and it makes you unhappy, you have three options: remove yourself from the situation, change it, or accept it totally." -- Eckert Tolle

Happy New Year! No doubt 2015 will be an exciting, interesting, challenging and rewarding new year! Are you ready to step up and embrace all that it will bring? Or, are you anxious and worried about what will happen and how you will handle it? At this time of year most of us are focusing on setting our goals or New Year's resolutions to accomplish in 2015. (Unfortunately, often the same ones we set last year). We tend to be over scheduled with meetings, errands, phone calls, and answering emails that we are completely distracted and out of focus. We are spending time and effort being concerned about what we have done, or are going to do, rather than focusing on what we are doing in the here and now. We are not being mindful so we miss out on the experience!

The formal definition of mindfulness is the intentional, accepting and nonjudgmental focus of one's attention on the emotions, thoughts and sensations occurring in the present moment. Simply said, mindfulness is about the ability to live in the present and self-regulate your thoughts and emotions to feel more positive, focused and fulfilled. Mindfulness can be practiced by choosing any activity in which you focus your attention only on that activity. According to Ruby Wax, who has a Masters degree in Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy from Oxford University, when we are in a high anxiety mode and feeling stressed with our minds racing and our hearts pounding, we should focus on something in the present. This could be a sound, a taste or a smell. This moves your focus from thoughts to sensations. By becoming aware of what is around you, you will calm down and be able to focus more. This "taming" of your mind takes practice. You cannot stop your mind from churning but you can train it to focus. Wax further says that focused attention breaks up the circuit of banal thoughts in our minds and builds up grey matter in the brain, which increases the ability to remember, attend, and execute actions.

Being less busy is another way to be in the here and now. Rather than being in the "doing" mode, try the "being" mode. For example, try something that pleases you like watching the sunset, waves crashing on the beach, petting your dog, something that for a moment stops time. Pay attention only to that moment. Exercise is also a way of developing your mindfulness. Be sure you do exercises you like. Some examples of mindful exercise practices are Pilates, Yoga, Tai Chi and martial arts all of which require focus on movement and breathing in the moment. Pay attention to your breathing as you go about these activities and see your breath as being part of the experience. Contemplate only what you are doing. Try not to let your thoughts wander - because they will at first. Just gently reel them back in until you can focus only on the here and now. Mindfulness can also be developed by practicing simple, short meditation practices, many of which can be found on the internet.

The benefits of mindfulness can be very calming and centering. The benefits have been show to not only help decrease your reaction to stressors in your life but also decrease anxiety and depression. By practicing mindfulness you become more positive, focused and fulfilled leading to more meaningful relationships, both personally and professionally.

Wishing you a Happy and Mindful 2015!

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