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MINDFULNESS – A’s & F’s for Processing

Awareness

Attitude

Ability

Allowance

Acceptance

Acknowledgement

Face (Fight / Flight / Freeze / Fix / Control)

Flow with Feelings

Figure Out – The Cause

Figure Out – The Choice / Response

Freedom

Awareness

(Note: *Awareness, Mindfulness, Self-Observation* are used interchangeably in this writing)

Mindfulness Defined

Mindfulness began with Jesus when he extorted us to Watch & Pray; Mindfulness is for those who have ears to hear and eyes to see.

The most common definition in literature:

“Paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment non-judgmentally” – “Moment to Moment Awareness” – Jon Kabat-Zinn

Mindfulness is about Learning to become *Self-Observant* – more specifically, more observant of your mind. You learn to become more Observant of everything in you and around you, as far as possible, and watch it as if it were happening to someone else. Mindfulness helps you get un-hooked from being *self-absorbed* or *pre-occupied*. Mindfulness helps you to see when you are *personalizing* what is happening inside you. Mindfulness helps to connect the myriad of mental and emotional dots in the mind in order to make sense of what is being experienced in your mind and body.

The truth that “the problem is not the problem, the problem is how we deal with the problem” is essentially stating that we choose, more than we may realize, how we understand and resolve our problems. Through mindfulness we learn to see the choices we are making from all our interpretations of life events, relationships, memories, mind-trips, etc. It’s truly amazing to discover, when conscious, that we actually make several choices each minute we are living. Through mindfulness we also discover how we can be our own worst enemy, which is realizing how we treat our perceptions and interpretations as facts.

A prime reason you suffer from your depression and your anxieties is that you *identify* with them. You say, "I'm depressed." But that is false. You are not depressed. If you want to be accurate, you would say, "I notice that I am experiencing depression right now." But you can hardly say, “I am depressed.” *You are not your depression.* That is but a strange kind of trick of the mind, a strange kind of illusion. You have deluded yourself into believing - though you are not aware of it - that you *are* your depression, that you *are* your anxiety, that you *are* your joy or the thrills that you have. "I am delighted!" You certainly are not delighted! Delight may be in you right now, but wait around, it will change; it won't last: it never lasts; it keeps changing: it's always changing. Clouds come and go: some of them are black and some white, some of them are large, others small. If we want to follow the analogy, you would be like the *sky*, observing the *clouds*. You learn to detach and become an *Observer*. That's' shocking, particularly to someone in the Western culture. You're not interfering. Don't interfere. Don't "fix" anything. Watch! Observe!

The trouble with people is that they're busy trying to Fix & Change things they don't even understand. We're always trying to fix and change things, aren't we? It never strikes us that things don't need to be fixed. They really don't. This is a great illumination. They need to be *understood*. If you understood them, *you would change*.

The above paragraph was modified from Awareness, by Anthony DeMello

Attitude

- Learn to Be Open / Receptive / Patient / Adaptive / Flexible / Curious / Determination to Learn
- Learn to Slow Down in Order to Balance Reason, Logic, Emotion
- Learn to Cultivate & Meditate *daily* an Attitude of Love, Respect, & Honesty about what is Good & Difficult
- Develop a Realistic Attitude – *the glass is actually both half full and half empty* – Be Honest about Pain & Problems and Know & Nurture Love

Ability

- Be Confident of your God given Ability to Process, Understand, Cope, Make Better Choices

Allow

- Willingness to Experience Thoughts & Emotions
- Give yourself Permission to Experience your Thoughts & Emotions
- What Works: Let It Be (this is where the Beetles had it right)
- What Does Not Work: Let it Go, Get Over It, Time Heals, Mind Over Matter

Acceptance / Radical

Disclaimer about Radical Acceptance – it does not mean you resign and give up, it means you accept the reality that is playing out, fully; whether you agree with it or not, it's still happening. If you fight it, you suffer more, if you accept and learn, you suffer less.

- Serenity Prayer
- Can Accept having a hard time Accepting
- Greif Process: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, Acceptance

Acknowledge – Face

- Lean into your experience !!

Fight / Flight / Freeze / Fix / Control

- These are the common habits / tendencies of coping with uncomfortable feelings and troubling thoughts

Additional Mind Tendencies : (Automatic Reactions)

- Denial, Bargain
- Minimize or Catastrophize
- Should's & Should Nots / Right - Wrong / Fair - Unfair
- Attachments to many mental and emotional dynamics – Mind is Sticky
- Over-Identify with Thoughts / Opinions / Beliefs / Memories, etc.
- Grasp & Hold onto what is Good / Avoid & Resist what feels and seems Bad
- Note: Normal to Still Do The Above

Flow with Feelings & Thoughts

Disclaimer about Emotions: Feelings can Not be controlled, they were never meant to be controlled, and besides, they are impossible to control anyways; and when you attempt to control your emotions, you only make yourself feel worse. Feelings are a Gift from God. Feelings are to be experienced and understood, as best as possible. The essential goal of an emotion is to make sense of what they are trying to communicate to you; they are actually trying to help you, if you would only listen. When you begin to listen you will have better potential of understanding why you are experiencing particular emotions. We were all wired to experience Joy, Depression, Anger, Fear, and Stress. More times than not, emotions are reflective of our mental processing, but more specifically about the conclusions we make and hold to. For more on emotions, see articles under Emotions under Resources on my webpage.

- Develop the mental habit of “I notice that I’m experiencing...”
- It’s really ok, actually important, to admit *honestly* that you are not liking what you are thinking and feeling !!

- Learn to Discern the Difference between a Thought / Fact / Opinion / Emotion
- Learn to see Mental & Emotional Attachments
- Our Mind gets Attached to Expectations / Perceptions / Outcomes / Opinions / Beliefs

“You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf” - J Kabat-Zinn

Trust:

- You Will Get Through, but don’t try to get through just to get through because it really won’t work anyways, Be Determined to Learn !!
- Understand that Emotions & Thoughts are constantly in Flux / Changing / A Constant Ebb & Flow
- Emotions are like Weather / Neurological Energy / Signals
- Learn: The Mind is Always Perceiving / Interpreting / Anticipating / Predicting / Judging / Analyzing / Comparing / Conjectures Conclusions, Beliefs, Opinions, and Meaning
- Learn to see part of your Mind as like a Dashboard of your Car – Ex, Red Light means we are over-heating, Speedometer alerts us if we are going to fast

**** If we Do the Above – SLOWLY & THOUGHTFULLY - we’ll have better Potential to:**

Figure Out the Cause

- Important to Learn Cause & Affect – The Challenge is to Make Sense of the Reasons for Emotions & Thoughts
- Figure Out What the Precipitating Event was or Memory or Thought or Emotion that was Triggering
- Always a Reason for Why We Think & Feel as we do
- “Can’t Change What You Don’t Understand” – Understanding Leads Towards Change; Change is a byproduct of Understanding Gained

Learn to Explore:

- Needs / Desires / Preferences – we are always Motivated by Reasons to Meet a Need, Desire, Preference, and Cope with Stress
- Attachments that can be Controlling;
- Beliefs / Opinions about myself / others;
- Personalizing – What am I Believing that is Wrong / Defective about Me;
- Expectations / Perceptions of Self / Other;
- Expectations of what I think Should Have or Should Not Have Happened;
- What am I trying to Control or Change;
- Codependency – Pleasing? Responsibility For?
- What am I Angry / Sad or Depressed Over / Stressed;
- What am I having a hard time Accepting;
- Guilt / Fear / Loss;
- What am I Identifying with;
- What did I get Dependent Upon;
- What Meaning am I deriving

Figure Out Need / Response / Cope / Choice to Make

- We Always Have A Choice
- Choices: Be Right or Wise & Effective / Mindless or Mindful & Thoughtful / Existing or Living

“They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms - *to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.*” Man's Search for Meaning by Victor Frankl

Freedom

- Free from our Mind-Trips & Emotional Storms Getting the Best of Us
- It is for Freedom that Christ set us Free – Gal. 5:1
- Free to Serve & Love, our Ultimate Call

Benefits of Learning Mindfulness:

- Creates Space for of God's Presence = Grounding, Empowering & Freeing
- Alleviate Unnecessary Suffering & Reduce Stress / Get Unhooked from Mind-Trips
- Maintain Perspective – Clarity of Thought / See the Whole Picture / Realize what you have Control over and not
- Clarity of Options For Wiser Choices
- Improved Relationships

Goal:

- Love & Serve more Effectively
- Wiser Choices to Meet Needs / Desires / Cope in Healthier Ways
- Respond More - React Less
- Be Effective
- Be Creative
- Live More Consciously & Confidently with Meaning & Purpose
- Synthesize Emotion Mind & Logic Mind into Wise Mind
- Develop Healthier Way of Thinking:
 - What is Wisest / Best / Good / Loving / Needed / Desirous / Most Important / vs Should's
 - More Motivating than Right-Wrong / Should-Should Not (Guilt) / Fair-Unfair