

Mindfulness Meditation

Many people ask me to describe mindfulness for them so they can get an idea of what a session is all about and how it might benefit them. It's not easy to describe something which has on the one hand become a way of life for me and yet on the other hand is different for every person who experiences mindfulness. It is a very personal journey and everyone who comes to it, does so, for often very different reasons.

Oftentimes someone will get involved because they have become addicted to the habit of worrying about a problem and for some reason they are of the belief that if they worry about the problem that they will find a solution. Do you find that worrying about something produces a good result? Maybe you have become addicted to the process of worrying or over thinking? Have you made anxiety something you live with? Has anxiety become so much a part of your life that you frequently experience panic attacks, even suffer bouts of depression? Do you struggle to find the joy of life? If you are constantly focussed on worry as a means to solve problems, you may be finding that the worry keeps growing because what you focus on expands.

Oftentimes people who work in stressful jobs, find they take home their concerns because there are no resources allocated in the work place for supervision. Staff have no resources allocated for them to debrief and let go of troublesome thoughts and emotions. Talking does not actually help in letting go of the emotional connections to stressful situations. In fact, it can often re-traumatise a person. You may have experienced this yourself either in a work situation or during a relationship breakdown or family tragedy. It's not until stress and anxiety begin to impact on your health that we begin to do something about it.

Oftentimes people come to mindfulness looking for a quick fix to stress. And initially they may struggle. Particularly if their mind is beset by thoughts and the stories that are attached to the thoughts. But as they keep attending the meditations, as they keep practicing. As they persist, they begin to notice that their thinking is attached to the feelings and emotions in their body. And that these feelings and emotions are activated by their thoughts. Which in turn creates a chemical reaction within the body. And the repetitive nature of this thinking process creates emotional responses in the body which then generate repetitive behaviours. Again and again and again. Until those behaviours become learned, habitual, behaviours.

Through the practice of mindfulness, we learn to allow these thoughts to come in, but instead of attaching to the thoughts and proceeding to the same old stories which trigger the same feelings and emotions and behaviours we just observe the thoughts as they come in. We allow whatever happens to be OK.

Without judgement. We don't try to change these thoughts or re-write history. We just observe them. And we notice what is happening in the body as we do this. Over the years we have stored a lot of feelings, emotions within the body. But as we spend time with the body, being present to what is happening in the body, the body eventually begins to release these stored feelings and emotions. We experience sensations. Feelings of hot, cold or numbness. Pins and needles, itches, muscle spasms, headaches, pains. And as we pay attention to the body these stored feelings and emotions will release. And very gradually we begin to notice we have space within us. Space in our body where once there was confusion and stress. And as we bring our mindfulness practice into the tasks we do each day, we stop spending all our time in the mind thinking. Believing that we are our thoughts. Instead we become focussed on what we are doing wholly. We use all of our body to walk or run or drive and we do each task consciously. Fully present.

And as we practice mindfulness we become more detached from our thinking. We begin to observe our thinking. We interrupt the habitual patterns of behaviour as we focus on task instead of our thinking. And as we practice being detached from our thinking for short periods of time, we create more space. More peace. More joy and happiness. And we begin to look forward to the time that we spend in quiet meditation. And we begin to practice more. It is more challenging to practice alone than in the group setting. There is something about the energy of the group that makes for a really powerful session. However, the more we practice, the more we begin to realise that life is an inside out job.

Many of us believe that external actions by others, cause us to react and respond. We tell ourselves, "It wasn't my fault. I was just reacting to what they did." But as you practice more it becomes apparent that you create everything that happens in your life. That life just gives you feedback. And that feedback relates to what is happening within. As you consciously maintain your own state; you can observe what is happening around you without being drawn into a reactive response or judgement.

And in the beginning you may still be drawn. And then you may begin to "notice" that you are being drawn. And eventually, with practice, you can just allow whatever happens to be OK and maintain your own state of being. In fact you could take responsibility for how you feel all the time. Now this does not always happen quickly nor are you necessarily always able to maintain that state at all times. But once you experience life from the inside out and can understand and reflect on your own responsibility for maintaining "your state," you will want to live your life that way always. You will look forward to the practice and you will take it with you into everything you do. And enjoy the practice. You may even notice that you begin prioritising your meditation time

each day. Once you start to realise that you are not the mind. You are not your thoughts. That is not who you are. You are free.

The gift of meditation is that it is available to anyone who wants to invest a small amount of time every day.