

NAME

The Practice of Mindfulness Audio Only.mp3

DATE

January 19, 2021

DURATION

26m 16s

START OF TRANSCRIPT**[00:00:00]**

Good morning, Wellspring's. It is good to be with you again if you've been with us in the past, at least since the pandemic has started and we've done our service virtually. You might notice that I look a little bit different today than I have when I offer my past messages. And that's for a reason. It's because of this current series that we're calling Coming Home. It's all about a variety of different spiritual practices that we can utilize to bring ourselves back into conscious connection with our lives, with our bodies, with our breath as we are living our lives, even in the midst of an overall life that is sometimes quite challenging. And so the message that I'm going to offer you today is about the practice of mindfulness. And I'm coming to you from the traditional pose that I assume in my daily practice of mindfulness. Now, the mindfulness one of the challenges in talking about mindfulness is that it's it's not really a concept. It's more an experience. And it's all going to be sharing some words with you today that will kind of, I hope, point at the reality of what mindfulness practice is about.

[00:01:16]

And there's one particular thing that I want to start out with that mindfulness is very much about mindfulness is about perspective and being able to open up a view on our lives that allows us to be deeply in touch with our moment to moment experience in a creative and flexible and also very deeply kind, even warm hearted way.

[00:01:51]

Mindfulness is about inviting us.

[00:01:55]

To be attentive and to bring attention to our lives, especially with those parts of ourselves that sometimes we find really challenging. It's particularly the parts of ourselves that are those patterns of behavior and thought and action that might have been here for a very, very, very long time, so much so that we just say, well, that's just us. And the truth is, if it's just us and it doesn't cause us or anyone else suffering, great.

[00:02:36]

But sometimes those patterns, that conditioning it gets in the way of a deeper relationship with our own lives and with each other. It is here that I have found mindfulness to be of inestimable value and learning to hold my experience more lightly and more lovingly. That opens up in such a way the capacity for change to grow in the direction of the deepest heart's desire.

[00:03:14]

I experience a lot of freedom or just kind of an opening of my experience with mindfulness and to kind of convey what that is about, I'm going to say something that I don't think I would have said a number of years ago, which is this. And if you're a member of the Generation X cohort, please forgive me. I promise I don't do this lightly. What I want to say is this is Schoolhouse Rock, you know, that great educational kind of a very 1970s cartoons that happened kind of between the larger cartoons in the advertisements and the commercials. Schoolhouse Rock was wrong.

[00:03:58]

Not totally.

[00:04:00]

I mean, you know, many of us remember, you know, conjunction Junction, what's your function and all those great songs as well to like three is magic number. And I'm just a bill. And most of the time, actually, Schoolhouse Rock was like totally on the money, was awesome and was a great part of my growing up in the 1970s. But in this one song, I believe that Schoolhouse Rock was off the mark. You might remember the one that sings a noun is a person, place or thing.

[00:04:36]

And actually, I don't think that a person is like a noun or a noun is a person.

[00:04:46]

I believe that to be alive, to be fully alive is actually a much more dynamic and fluid and much more verb like kind of experience than the solid thing that we think of when we think of a noun.

[00:05:03]

Kind of separate apart.

[00:05:07]

Mindfulness, I think, is a way of being in touch with the flow, the ongoing flow and stream of our experience that again, really kind of opens up our lives by becoming less solid.

[00:05:25]

In many of ways, we actually become more vital and more in touch with life itself, as the great mythologist Joseph Campbell, when he was asked about the meaning of life, once he said, no, no, I don't I don't think we're searching for the meaning of life.

[00:05:42]

He said, you know, that was that was kind of too much of a concept.

[00:05:45]

He said, no, I think what we are search of is an experience of being alive that resonates right down to the very core of who we are.

[00:05:57]

He said that's where I think many of us are in search of. And although I have no idea if Joseph Campbell practiced mindfulness, what he's offering there, that invitation is very much what mindfulness offers as well to.

[00:06:17]

There are some formal definitions of mindfulness and they can be helpful as kind of things that point to what the experience is about or that help us kind of set our intention to practice. One is by John Capias in one of the foremost teachers of mindfulness in the Western world.

[00:06:32]

And he said mindfulness is paying attention in a particular way, on purpose in the present moment and nonjudgmental on purpose in the present moment and nonjudgmental.

[00:06:49]

That's a good definition. I think he's right on. He certainly knows what he's talking about. But that's not just what mindfulness is as an experience. I think something that gets very close to the heart of it is actually from the song that we were just led through.

[00:07:10]

The less I seek my source for some definitive, the closer I am to fine, the less I seek my source for some definitive, the closer I am to fine.

[00:07:29]

Just speaking those words reminds me in this very moment of an opportunity for release, some of the ways that I may have been holding my body more intensely or more tightly than I needed to.

[00:07:44]

That's what mindfulness can help us recognize, the residual stuff that we all carry, especially if we have experiences as I have had for a good portion of my life, with believing that somehow there's just something off about us and that keeps us kind of playing tight and small and afraid.

[00:08:14]

What brought me to mindfulness was a saying from the recovery community, now it's a guidepost is not the absolute truth, just found it to be true in my case. It says that the first five years of our recovery, my case, the first five years of my sobriety. It takes us that time to just find our marbles and then in the next five years after that, we learn how to play with our marbles.

[00:08:45]

So I was about five years into my recovery in 2010 when I recognized that putting down the alcohol also opened up an opportunity to get in touch with all that stuff, that anxiety, that sense of not enough ness that drove the alcohol usage in the first place to that place that I came to know as an addiction. And so I first sought out mindfulness as an opportunity to want to get a handle on how to relate better to that gnawing sense of anxiety, of not enough ness. And mindfulness has helped me learn to be calmer. And if all we get from mindfulness is an experience to kind of quote from the popular blog and podcast and writings about mindfulness called 10 percent happier, all we get from mindfulness is 10 percent happier, 10 percent calmer.

[00:09:50]

That's awesome. Especially right now, especially in the midst of these weeks of chaos and horror.

[00:10:00]

If all we get is a little bit more calm and that is wonderful. And mindfulness offers something else.

[00:10:15]

Not just to be able to access more com, but to be able to open up to and with our experiences in the midst of circumstances. An attempted insurrection, the very public airing of violent white supremacy.

[00:10:39]

An ongoing pandemic mindfulness does not give us an answer to these things. But mindfulness invites us to be in touch with our experience rather than coming out or checking out, invites us to turn our attention to our lives as an act of love, especially when life is profoundly difficult and challenging right now and to stay in touch with our lives in a sustainable way.

[00:11:21]

So I'd like to invite us into a time of practice. It will be an abbreviated mindfulness practice, not the full 20 or 25 minutes that we tend to do every week. And that I do in some form or another every day. What we do every week on Wednesdays at seven o'clock, we haven't been there yet. The mindfulness drop in group is a wonderful group. We practice together. We connect with each other. It's a really beautiful experience of connection and community through this time of the pandemic. Sometimes, you know, some folks show up almost every single week. Some folks drop in once a month or twice a month or I've seen there three times maybe over the last ten months.

[00:12:03]

Whenever you show up is perfect because that's what the practice of mindfulness is about, is learning to show up.

[00:12:11]

And if showing up for you right now, in this moment, in this moment excuse me, only looks like observing the practice and not participating in it, if that's the right choice for you and the safe and skillful choice for you. Excellent. Just observe. And if you want to join in the practice, I invite you to do so now.

[00:12:34]

So I'm going to invite my eyes to close and you can invite your eyes to close if you wish, if you try to leave your eyes open because that's more helpful for you, I'd invite you maybe just bring your eyesight to a point about six degrees in front of you where your eyes can rest and invite you to kind of bring the body into a way of sitting that you feel a sense of support from the chair or the couch or the ground or the cushion underneath you. And just noticing what it is like in this moment as you kind of receive the basic energy of what is here, of noticing, this is how it is right now and this is how I am right now.

[00:13:27]

Just beginning to notice how it is.

[00:13:31]

And we can begin to tune in to how it is by opening up the attention through the prism of our senses. Maybe noticing that even if the eyes are closed on the backs of our eyelids, we may be noticing form color, shadow, light patterns, noticing how the sense of sight may be showing up for you in this very moment. Tuning in as well to the sense of sound, of listening, of hearing, noticing the sounds that you're receiving right here and right now.

[00:14:18]

Noticing the sense and sensation of touch of contact, maybe it's the air on the skin, maybe it's the clothing in contact with the skin that you're wearing. Maybe it is that sense of connection with how you are sitting.

[00:14:36]

Opening up to the sense of touch.

[00:14:41]

Noticing as well, too, as you're breathing, that you may be receiving a scent or a smell or the absence of a scent or smell right now in this moment.

[00:14:54]

Noticing as we begin to move into and toward the body the sense of taste or flavor, how it is within the mouth, dryness or moisture or the absence of taste or flavor. Noticing how it is to mindfully connect to the senses as they're showing up in this moment.

[00:15:22]

And as we begin to move from outer to inner with our awareness, noticing how it is in this moment with your mind and with your mood.

[00:15:33]

Maybe noticing the presence of thoughts or thinking thoughts that are fast.

[00:15:42]

Thoughts that are slow, thoughts that are familiar, thoughts that are kind of novel or new. Maybe noticing just what it's like to observe your thoughts, that there's a part of you, part of me, a part of all of us that is aware and can kind of stand back from the experience and simply observe in the same way that we might look upon a cloud passing through the sky.

[00:16:11]

Noticing what it is like to bring that attentive and open awareness to our mood, to our feelings.

[00:16:21]

To whatever emotions are present right now. Noticing if it's safe for us to allow ourselves to make space for whatever it is that we are feeling in this moment. Noticing that sensations may be present within the body, pleasant sensations, unpleasant sensations were just kind of neutral sensations, noticing one moment to the next, the sensations that are present.

[00:17:00]

And beginning to kind of turn the focus of our attention in the direction of a sensation that is common to you and to me and to all of us right now, which is that we are breathing.

[00:17:17]

Noticing how it is to take an in breath. And noticing how it is to release that outbreath. And it could be that the breath is fast or slow or shallow or deep or smooth or kind of ragged and just noticing that this is how the breath is. And just continuing to turn the focus of our attention to each breath.

[00:17:54]

Maybe particularly aware that there's a part where parts of the breath that are most present in the field of your awareness. And allowing that sensation of breathing. To be kind of a grounding or an anchoring point of attention. So that if you notice, the mind wanders. Hops around in time, gets caught up in the strong current of thinking or feeling. Not meeting that wandering mind with any sense of judgment or thinking that you're doing it wrong, but actually allowing that awareness of that mind that has lost touch and gone elsewhere. That actually it's being aware of losing touch, that becomes the very gateway for getting back in touch.

[00:18:51]

I kindly and intentionally bringing the focus of your attention back.

[00:19:04]

Noticing this breath. And noticing this breath. And noticing this breath.

[00:19:24]

And as we bring this little time of mindfulness practice to a close, maybe just setting an intention for ourselves and as we notice, beyond the practice today, beyond the service today, as we go throughout our day, if we notice that we get a little scattered where the mind kind of loses touch, that it is just as close to us as is our breath, as we say, to bring ourselves back into mindful connection with this moment.

[00:20:02]

So that's a little bit of the practice of mindfulness. What I'm also aware of in this moment. Is that.

[00:20:16]

It's kind of hard to be alive right now. I don't mean that in a despairing way. I mean that for all the reasons that I said before, all the particular parts of this moment of this historical era in which we are alive.

[00:20:33]

And that it's tough. And so what I want to do in conclusion, is offer you a story. It's a story from what is called the Jātaka Tales, which are kind of mythological stories of the Buddha's life. And in this one particular story, it's from a prior lifetime of the Buddha before he became the Buddha, when he was a shopkeeper. And in the story, it said that he was in his shop one day, just kind of going about his daily business. And he saw walking down the main street, the main thoroughfare of the town of the village, a being of such luminous presence and beauty that the Buddha found himself naturally drawn towards this being towards this creature. And he left his shop, bringing to this being a gifts offerings, wanting to get close to this being, and that the moment the Buddha started to stand in the street, something changed.

[00:21:45]

The skies grew dark and stormy and thunder cracked and what is called, in the tradition, the demigod demon God Mara, who's really an aspect of all of our minds, the aspect of delusion, not being in touch with our lives, that a voice that says there's something profoundly wrong with us. That voice started hounding the Buddha, turned back.

[00:22:09]

Do not follow this luminous creature. Who are you to do this? Who are you to follow this path? And yet the Buddha continued on following this luminous creature.

[00:22:22]

Until the Buddha was in touch with this luminous creature. And the skies parted. And the sun came out and the birds and the plants and everything else started to shine with this luminous quality that before the Buddha had only perceived injustice. One creature and I want to share you with you these words from Tara Brock and her telling of this story, this merchant that the Buddha was found himself standing in front of this luminous creature and the creature, the being said, well done, well done, keep on through all the fears and pain in this life.

[00:23:14]

Keep on following your heart and trusting in the power of awareness.

[00:23:22]

Keep on one step at a time and you will know a freedom and a peace beyond all imagining.

[00:23:39]

Now, I love this story, and I can't say that I've gotten to that place because I don't think it's a place beyond all imagining of peace and freedom.

[00:23:53]

But I believe that all of us can taste and touch into that spacious awareness within each and every one of us that allows us to keep on through the power of mindful awareness, to be in touch with our lives even when it is challenging.

[00:24:15]

And so today, this is for you, my deepest wish for all of us, myself included.

[00:24:23]

May we keep on?

[00:24:26]

Stay in touch and be in touch and loving and kind way by simply.

[00:24:39]

Taking a breath and then offering it back.

[00:24:45]

And staying in relationship with our lives, even as challenging as this life is.

[00:24:54]

May we all keep on? I'm in. And may you live in Blaesing?

[00:25:04]

For the prayer today, I'm going to ask us to do something different, just maybe close your eyes.

[00:25:09]

No words here. Just close your eyes and notice what is here for you. And if you would just take some breaths with me. Even in the space that separates us. There is the air between us.

[00:25:31]

And may we be alive and breathe together.

[00:26:08]

My friends, may we all keep on. May it be so.

END OF TRANSCRIPT

