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A Los Angeles Psychotherapist: Individual, Couple, Child and Family Therapy

About Mindfulness, Meditation and Mental Health

We live in an advanced age of technology and, with cell phones and texting, most of us are hooked into multi-tasking and instant connection. I think it is rather sad to see a mother out with her children or a family out for the day or a couple where the cell phone takes their attention, rather than the people they are with. The practice of mindfulness is the opposite of this frenetic preoccupation and is so simple. It is just being... being on the walk, being at the red light, being in company with another.

Do you notice that multi-tasking seems to feed on itself? Try this experiment. The next time you are multi-tasking, just **pause** and check in with yourself. How are you feeling? What are you experiencing in your body? Are you relaxed? Are you tense? Are you in a hurry? Just observe yourself for a moment. When you do this you are entering the territory of mindfulness, of being present and you have the choice to be there every moment. What is the benefit of this **pause**? Often there is a great sigh and relaxation into the moment.

I often suggest that my clients try meditation. The process of meditating is a process of letting go. It is really an extended experience of mindfulness. There are many schools of meditation that suggest watching the breath, noting feelings, or repeating a mantra. Instead, I suggest you allow the process of meditation to unfold inside of you. As you sit, lie down or whatever (I do not think a special posture is necessary) thoughts will come up and go away and, really, the whole process is just allowing whatever comes to be there, not forcing the experience toward any particular direction.

Some clients respond skeptically to the idea of meditation, noting they have a hard time stopping their thoughts. Meditation is not a process of trying to stop or start or do anything. It is letting go. Trying itself is the antithesis of meditating. Thought is a natural part of us — our minds just think. The process of meditating is actually dynamic and moving. Thoughts are present and foremost, then they recede, then there is the sound of a bird, then a sense of sighing in the body and so forth... it is like a river changing, moving, curving and we get to have the experience of watching and being that river.

So, why should you try mindfulness and meditation? Clients often report a sense of increased release and relaxation. They say there is a subtle sense of flow in their days and less reactivity to issues that would normally have them spinning. Clients practicing mindfulness/mediation report that it helps reduce stress and, often, enriches their relationships.

Individual • Couple • Adolescent • Child and Family Therapy

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