

Mindfulness & Meditation: Mindful Suffering



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Homework Review/Questions from Last Week



- Actively choose which seeds to water each day
 - pay attention to ways that life seems to change when you consciously water seeds of the things you want to experience
 - ✦ be on the lookout for things you do which cultivate experiences you may wish to minimize
 - ✦ adjust your involvement in these as life requires
- Practice, practice, practice
 - implement both formal and informal meditation daily
 - observe with curiosity the results of each
- Have fun, explore, be playful with your practice!
 - when we bring our full attention to anything, it becomes a richer experience...play with this idea!

Mindful Suffering



“When you know how to suffer well,
you suffer a lot less.”

- Thich Nhat Hanh

- Caring for our emotional and physical suffering
- Experiencing positive things in the midst of suffering

Caring for Our Suffering



- When we experience something aversive we tend to:
 - Elaborate/ruminate on it (which makes it bigger)
 - Try to minimize it (which makes it more persistent)
 - ✦ Thus, we add a “2nd arrow” to our original injury which causes us to re-live the pain over and over
- Coming back to the present moment provides refuge
 - This means observing the thought/feeling with curiosity as it is, without trying to make it anything else
 - ✦ Like watching a deer you stumble upon in the woods

Caring for Our Suffering



- “Turning toward” our pain is an act of compassion for it and for ourselves
 - Welcoming it warmly, to sit together with you in mindful awareness
 - ✦ “Hello depression! I am here for you! 😊”
 - Making space for hardship as a natural part of life helps us create ease with it
 - ✦ Like giving a restless child space to be wild
 - Caring for suffering in this way reduces our struggle with it

Positive Things Amidst the Suffering



- True reality is always bigger than one thought or emotion
 - When we focus on them they may become the whole of our attention, but they are never the whole of our reality
 - ✦ Waves in the ocean or clouds in the sky
 - Once they pass, we often forget how distressing they were
- While suffering is real, good things occurring alongside it are no less real
 - Observing mindfully helps us make contact with these good things, which alleviates or offers reprieve from suffering
 - ✦ Your breath is your home

Homework



- Practice mindfulness meditation daily
- Start with brief (5 minute) exercises
 - Practice observing physical and emotional pain as it is, without trying to make it something else
 - ✦ This takes courage! It is okay to be afraid!
 - Practice expanding your awareness to the good that is always occurring, even in the midst of suffering
- When mind wanders, elaborates, or wrestles with pain
 - Gently and persistently bring it back to curious and present observation

Thank You!



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& help spread the word to pastors about this FREE workshop I am doing for pastors about how to work with couples in their congregation who are suffering or seeking ways to improve their relationship:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/working-with-couples-workshop-tickets-54725119305>