

# 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 “2<sup>nd</sup> 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>