

WViews FINAL ARTICLE (March 2021)

Mindfulness is being right here, right now.

It's letting go of thoughts, emotions, and sensations that take you away from this present moment. In mindfulness we try to mitigate distractions—pleasant or unpleasant— and really, truly notice what is happening.

Does your mind wander when a friend is sharing her thoughts with you? Do you move through your day without taking time to notice the beauty of nature all around us here at Willamette View? Are you caught up in thinking about your to-do list, or noticing the pain in your left shoulder and wishing it wasn't there? Is the noise of your next-door neighbor's tv driving you crazy? Are you caught up in worry about a loved one's health?

If your answer is "yes" to any of these questions, try sitting down for five minutes and notice your breathing, or go for a slow exploratory walk outside. Or notice the deliciousness of a piece of chocolate. Hold the chocolate in your mouth for as long as you can, enjoying the texture tastes and flavors, subtle and strong.

In mindfulness meditation, we focus on our breath, one breath at a time. When we notice our thoughts or emotions taking us away from the breath we gently come back to the breath, over and over. We acknowledge the thoughts, emotions and sensations that distracted us. Rather than pushing them away with judgement, we are learning to befriend them with kindness, forgiveness and patience. We are learning to be with our life just as it is. The pain, sorrow, fears, losses as well as joy, love and beauty.

During meditation our breath slows down, blood pressure may decrease, aches and pains may gradually lessen. Over time, mindfulness meditation can bring about a greater sense of appreciation, joy, greater clarity and focus, and less anxiety and fear.

If it's possible that mindfulness meditation is really this helpful, and many people say it is – doctors, scientists, psychologists – why isn't everyone doing it? Because It's difficult. The mind is used to thinking, perhaps hundreds of thoughts every minute. With mindfulness, we're training our mind to let go of our thoughts. With a regular meditation practice, you will gradually notice the difference.

Wyma Rogers, who attends Willamette View's mindfulness meditation group, contributes the poem, "You Reading This, Be Ready" by William Stafford.

You Reading This, Be Ready.

Starting here, what do you want to remember?
How sunlight creeps along a shining floor?
What scent of old wood hovers, what softened
sound from outside fills the air?

Will you ever bring a better gift for the world
than the breathing respect that you carry
wherever you go right now? Are you waiting
for time to show you some better thoughts?

When you turn around, starting here, lift this
new glimpse that you found; carry into evening
all that you want from this day. This interval you spent
reading or hearing this, keep it for life –

What can anyone give you greater than now,
starting here, right in this room, when you turn around?

By: William Stafford