

INTRODUCTION TO THE MINDFUL MONTHLY MEETING

This group, 'The Mindful Monthly Meeting' has been going since 2012, once a month on the last Tuesday of each month. Initially, I set up the group as a way of passing on what I knew about mindfulness. I first knowingly came across mindfulness in 2002, and since that time, I have sat a lot in meditation, completed further training courses, read widely and attended several retreats. ***I benefitted greatly from this in-depth prolonged period of study and direct experience, and I continue to teach others about mindfulness to this day.***

After the group had been running for a couple of years, I gradually came to realise that I wanted to share in a much less scripted and didactic way, more about the natural, normal, direct experiences of being and not being mindful in ordinary everyday life. ***I wanted to go beyond meditation and teaching about mindfulness meditation to sharing and exploring the reality of everyday life; all the funny, stupid and selfish things of the mind and all the kind, caring and sensitive things of the mind ~ and everything in between ~ my own mind included*** (which despite all the meditation, previous experience and understanding, still ~ as people are often surprised to hear ~ can be just as unmindful, at times, as it ever was). I wanted to see what that sharing would actually be like and to provide a space for people to talk about what it's like for them to be living ordinary everyday life during all those times when we're not sitting and meditating.

Many people have come to the group and some have stayed and still come regularly each month. In our own lives, we may or may not have an ongoing mindful meditation practice, we may or may not have completed a mindfulness course, we may or may not have read anything about mindfulness and we may or may not have attended retreats. We may know a lot or a little about mindfulness. It really doesn't matter. ***It's not about what or how much you know about mindfulness ~ it's really about looking into what you experience directly in everyday life.*** That's all that matters ~ that ~ plus being curious and wanting to share and find out about those experiences with others. Sometimes, even without questions or words, sometimes in silence, and sometimes with laughter and humour.

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We are all different in our good and not so good experiences of life, but ***what we have in common is a mind ~ a brain ~ a mind which tries constantly to help us to survive in a very stressful world. To survive and thrive in the world.*** A mind that allows us ~ through our senses ~ to experience being alive. When we're truly alive, when we come to our senses, we're aware of everything we can see, hear, touch, taste and smell, moment to moment with all these moments as they change from moment to moment. When we're mindful, we can experience all this and we don't need to edit anything.

So this group is not actually about meditation, or the practice and teaching of meditation at all. Although, it is about being Aware, which funnily enough is what meditation means anyway; to be aware. So if you can be aware in those moments whilst you're meditating, that's great. If that helps you to be aware in real life, that's good too. We're here in this group to share those experiences of real life. All those times when we're alive and aware of each present, fleeting moment ~ mindful or not. ***The point is, we're not just alive when we meditate as a practice. We're alive here and now; as we Notice, Observe and Witness each changing moment.*** Are you breathing? Are you present?

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***So what is this group for?*** Is it a forum for intellectual and philosophical discussions about being alive? ***No!***

Is it like therapy for the purpose of solving our problems and issues? ***No!***

Are we here to help one another? ***No ~ we're only here to talk about being mindful or not and talk about the direct experience of ordinary everyday life.***

We're here because we're living a life and we have a mind through which we experience that life. ***We're here to Notice, Observe and Witness, to share and to listen. To listen deeply and mindfully to one another in a caring way ~ a way which allows us to notice and let go of Self.***

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We're here to be present, to be kind and available, Noticing Observing and Witnessing whatever comes up within our own mind and sharing what goes on in our mind with the mind of others. Exploring, in a safe and caring way just exactly what that's like.

***We're here to understand that there is life and everything that happens in life ~ and there is what the mind adds to it all.***

We're here to understand that the mind adds stress and suffering, that the mind can make the experiences of life 'unreal' and often unpleasant, and equally the mind can make the experiences of life 'super-real' and unbelievably pleasant. ***The mind has a lot to answer for!***

We can't turn off the mind ~ ***there's no off switch*** ~ and trying to avoid or distract ourselves away from our fears and suffering, or trying to make our mind be just the way we want it to be, doesn't succeed in lasting for long. The mind adds more and more to the experience of ordinary everyday life suffering, and by sharing, we can learn to have a kind and accepting approach to the mind so that we can see, smile and laugh a bit about it all and allow the thoughts, feelings and sensations to pass and change just as they will. ***We don't need to make matters worse.*** Sharing with each other, real examples from everyday life of times when we're mindful and when we're not mindful, in my view is really helpful and can make us feel less alone and have more of a sense of belonging and understanding. ***We don't need to do anything other than be aware.***

There is nothing to achieve in this group. Nothing to gain. Nothing to succeed with. Nowhere to go or to get to. We have already arrived ~ ***we are here!*** Any benefit, any joy, any thing we might feel or experience as a result of sharing in this way is purely a by-product of being here in this moment, paying attention mindfully, sharing about ordinary everyday life and really deeply listening to one another.

***What do you want to share?!***

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Colin Eveleigh ~ Petersfield 2017