

## Third Installment of Radical Acceptance March 19, 2021

### Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a state of active, open attention on the present.

In its simplest form, it is bringing a conscious awareness to the present moment. It's about connecting with ourselves and our surroundings in the here and now.

Mindfulness is a state of active, open attention on the present. Clients learn how to observe their thoughts and feelings without judgement. Mindfulness is an important practice that our therapists bring to many groups and activities. Our art therapist, Marianne, shares the following:

The wandering mind.... The mind is a wonderful time traveler. It can take us to the past, to the future and all around the global clock and it can do so in an instant. There is a natural and normal pendulum between which the mind travels that helps us to use the past to inform our future.

For instance: how many of you are thinking about what you are going to do after you're done reading this? Maybe you are planning on going to dinner to a favorite restaurant. The past experience at this particular restaurant has informed a future decision about whether we want to go there again. This type of mind travel happens often and is an integral part of our functioning selves. An important aspect of this mind-travel is that we also come back to the present to take action, moving ourselves towards a future of our choosing: we consciously pick up the phone to make a reservation.

Being in the NOW is the only place the body can be. I think we experience this as adults when we try to re-live our youthful vigor in sports. The reminders come to us swiftly that even though our minds might think we are 17, our bodies are not. Our bodies only exist in this moment. We can't physically return to a memory nor can we physically jump ahead. We are only physically here now.

What does it mean then, when the mind travels and the body remains here? It means we are briefly disconnected. There's a gap. For some, this gap has been necessary as it pertains to survival. For survivors of childhood abuse, the disconnection or disassociation, allowed that child to survive. It's flight, fight or freeze. Flight and freeze can mean being mentally somewhere different from the body. But at some point, surviving shifts into thriving and for those whose mind does not return often enough to the present body, thriving is a challenge. The gap—the space between the body and the mind—feels like an insurmountable chasm. Important to note, the chasm isn't a void; it is filled with the debris of everyday life. The mind is filled with intrusive thoughts: "I should have," "I need to," "I didn't do," and "I need to do." Rumination and expectation are two spots where the mind can get stuck. When the mind gets stuck in a different time, it is important to understand how paralyzing that can be.

Why mindfulness? Being present can allow us to reconcile traumatic factors, such as feeling safe within an environment. Being present can deconstruct time, reducing the gap between then and now, quieting the intrusive thoughts or allowing them to pass by. Being present is healthy focus. Being present is being aware of here, now, and being. Mindfulness is a tool to regulate our breathing and our heart rates and to bring ourselves to a state of thriving.

*By Andrew Harris, MS, LPC*

*<https://hopeway.org/blog/radical-acceptance>*