

Dharmette: Four Ways Toward Fullness

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So we're kind of known here at IMC as a place to practice mindfulness, where we teach mindfulness. And to some degree it's true, but maybe there's something more important than mindfulness. Probably a number of things. But what I'd like to offer today is rather than just being mindful and then letting go of something and coming back to the present moment, that the task is to feel more fully. And part of the reason why we're often challenged in their life is because we haven't felt fully what's going on. And maybe mindfulness is support for feeling our life fully.

So what does that mean fully? I think often we feel it partially. We prioritize certain part of our experience as being important. Sometimes people prioritize the stories the mind makes, the predictions of what this means, and imagination of what should have happened, or all kinds of things. And so we're living in the stories, and that's only part of the present moment. But if we prioritize that, we're not feeling right now fully.

Sometimes we prioritize the emotions, and we're overwhelmed by them, and we just too much, too much, and we're just kind of collapsed into them, maybe, or we're going along with them. That's like the best thing going. This round of anger is like, this is it. This is a good life because now I'm really charged up and I was kind of sleepy before, but now I'm going to let it rip and that'll just be great. So we're prioritizing emotions in some way or other. Some people prioritize their body.

Sometimes it's what they look like. Some people are ordinarily concerned about their physical appearance and how they're seen and how they're recognized by others. Some people are particularly oriented towards relationships. Again, how are you being seen by others? How are you being accepted by others? Do you have said, do people like me? Do they not like me?

And the whole negotiation, you know, half, you know, big part priorities, priority is to figure out relationships. Am I safe? Am I not safe? How do I figure out to do here? I'm responsible. I have to be the one who takes care of things, fixes things, fixes the relationship. I have to accommodate someone. They better accommodate me. You know, the answer should come from them and... All kinds of complicated ways.

So there's a prioritization that goes on. So we don't feel the whole. And so what does it mean to feel the whole then? And that is to begin wherever you start, wherever you are, and then expand outwards to include more of what's here. So a very nice kind of simple approach in mindfulness is to have a checklist approach of areas. Yes. Maybe four different areas that you go through to say, what else is going on here?

I'd like to offer five. It's the basic instructions that we give in mindfulness meditation here. So whatever is happening for you, how's that affecting your breathing? What you're breathing like when this is going on? That's beginning to start feeling more of what's really literally going on for you in the present moment. How often through the course of the day are you... touching into your breathing and feeling it. And breathing is in the nexus of so much of our life experience.

The second is what's the physical experience like? What's it like in the body? What's the embodied experience here? The third is what's the emotion that's present? What's the feeling, the emotional quality of it? And probably we should say plural. What are the emotions that are part of this? There might be different ones. There might be layers of emotions. Some emotions are symptoms of deeper emotions.

So what are the emotions here? The third is, what's the state of the mind? What am I thinking? But also, not just what I'm thinking, but how I'm thinking. What's the quality of how I'm thinking right now? So, for example, if what you're doing is thinking a lot. You're just spinning out and thoughts and stories and ideas.

And he said, she said, and, you know, just kind of caught in that world of thoughts. Then you go through the checklist to fill it out. And you can start anywhere, but what's the breathing like now? Well, actually, the breathing feels tight and constricted. I feel like I can't really breathe easily because I'm so caught up in these stories. Okay. Okay. What does it feel like in my body? Well, I'm mostly up in my head. That's what most of the energy is.

But if I expand outward to feel the rest of my body, it feels tense. I didn't realize how much tension I'm holding my shoulders and my belly. My belly is tight. What's going on emotionally? Oh, look at that. I didn't know this, but all these thoughts and stories I'm caught up in

they're related to being afraid, or related to being angry, or related to being lonely or feeling hurt or something. And then, so now you're filling out the picture. So now you get a sense of something more global. All this is part of the picture. And all this is part of the picture right now.

Oh, this is to feel it fully. And so what happens to the preoccupation with thinking when it's held and contained within this wider field? For some people that makes it even harder to be with it, for some people it makes it easier to be with it. Ah, this is what it is to feel it fully. Now the body can start relaxing. Now maybe I can breathe in an easier way.

Now, maybe I don't have to be as tightly involved with these emotions as I thought I was. They don't have to drive the thinking. I can make room for them in the body, make space for it. The time is. I can recognize, oh, this is how it is. And he starts to feel, oh, this is what the bigger picture is like. This creates room. And we're not as involved with those thoughts as we were at the beginning.

So if it's any of these, so if maybe it's a little strong, maybe there's a lot of pain in the body someplace, and that's really caught. How is that affecting the breathing? What are the emotions connected to it? What's happening with the thoughts, the beliefs, and ideas? And how you're thinking. Maybe it's an emotion. So then you ask, well, how's the breathing? How's the body? How's the thinking?

So the kind of the idea, the goal is to kind of not to just simply be mindful, but to be aware fully, the full picture, the full ecology of what's happening. And in doing that, then giving breathing room, giving space to how we are. And it might be a lot easier to do that because we're not prioritizing or caught in the grip of a piece of the whole. Something different has a chance to happen if we're more inclusive and have a wider field within which to experience and be with our life. And one of those things that can happen is that you might discover that in the wider field of feeling and sensing and knowing fully, it might be easier to care. It might be easier to have compassion.

It might be easier to have wisdom, have a sense of integrity, have a little bit of sense of freedom or agency. Oh, I can find my way through this now, or I could at least care for it more fully, which I couldn't do when I was prioritizing one piece of the whole rather than sensing the whole. So... And in a sense, in offering that what this practice is to feel or know fully, it's not a practice to get rid of anything, but rather to know it fully, because the fullness of experience sometimes is the very thing that heals, releases, freeze, transforms, changes what's going on. They allow something to grow, something to unfold. That can't if we're stuck in one particular mode.

So maybe it's interesting for you. Maybe there are ways that you could be more fully who you are. And in that fullness of who you are, you might find a much more meaningful way, satisfying way to go through your day. Thank you.