

Mindfulness Saves Stress and Turmoil for All  
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Taos News Article

*The Taos News has committed to implement a weekly column to help educate our community about emotional healing through grief. People may write questions to Golden Willow Retreat and they will be answered privately to you and possibly as a future article for others. Please list a first name that grants permission for printing.*

**Dear Ted,**

I keep hearing about mindfulness and it seems that everybody thinks that that the term is a generic term and that everybody already knows what it means. I realize I'm only 16, but I don't understand mindfulness but I keep hearing it being used when someone is mad or inconsiderate. This came up recently when my friends and I were sitting around talking negatively about someone and the teacher said we needed to be more mindful. She's probably right, but I really didn't know what it meant. I assume it meant to stop talking badly about that person. Will you help me out here as I believe it is probably an important part of emotional healing.

Thank you, Full of Mind

**Dear Full of Mind,**

Your play on words here for how you chose to sign off fits the topic well! I appreciate you taking the time to write me this question and having the bravery to say you don't understand something. This is a lost art that leads to a lot of misinterpretations in a time in the world where we can't afford miscommunication due to such a high volatility and loss of mindfulness!

Now that I used the word, let me see if I can help you out. Let's go back to your sign off title. There is a tendency for people to be totally in their mind. This leads to an analytical process that looks like: data in and data out. This can lead to a decrease in empathy, and other emotional bridges that can promote understanding of another's actions or comments.

When your brain is taking in information it is also rapidly processing the data. This is what keeps you alive in each moment. This mental process can lead to a close minded view on the world. The brain only sees your judgement and then takes the next reactive step. It is almost like being caught in the forest and not able to step up on the hill to see where you are and where you wish to go.

When caught in the forest, the trees get closer, noises are louder, and survival from a fear base is the survival mechanism. The brain actually goes into this survival gear in which there is mostly a fight or flight feeling and answers seem black and white with no negotiation room to bridge the black and white thinking.

Mindfulness is the bridge between black and white thinking. You don't have to only hate or love someone. Maybe you do like some aspects of someone, but not enjoy other parts. Perhaps the yesses and nos in your mind may have room for negotiation after all. Perhaps you can find a maybe? Mindfulness gives the opportunity to remove yourself from the story long enough to see other options and to see how your decisions may impact others in positive and/or negative ways.

Quite often, quick reactions lead to more damage as there was not a process that allowed you to step away and see how emotions can play into a decision. When you take a breath and remember that, for the most part, people (that includes you) are just doing the best they can to navigate the world around them.

Try and move out of war mode and try to find the levels of serenity inside you. Try to not be immediately reactive. This can hurt others. Finding compassion for your fellow human beings, as well as other living things, can help bridge the difficult black and white world that can keep you fearful and in a fight or flight response rather than a smart, forgiving, and compassionate state that serves all and brings more peace into this world. I wish you well. Until next week, take care.

Golden Willow Retreat is a nonprofit organization focused on emotional healing and recovery from any type of loss. Direct any questions to Ted Wiard, LPCC, CGC, Founder of Golden Willow Retreat at (575) 776-2024 or [GWR@newmex.com](mailto:GWR@newmex.com)