

## #2 – Practicing Mindfulness

Developing Mindfulness takes practice. We are so used to going through our days not really thinking or being aware that it will startle you once you start practicing the art of mindfulness. You will become aware of everything and experience it in the present moment versus the past or the future through deliberate mental practices.

All Mindfulness involves some form of meditation practice. There are lots of misconstrued ideas about meditation, especially in western civilization, so let's take a moment to understand what Mindfulness is not:

- ✓ Not Having Any Emotion. When you start to practice mindfulness, you will see that it does not relieve you from your emotions. If you are experiencing tough times in your life, it is easy to want to become mindless about everything surrounding you. That is not what mindfulness is about.

Because you are actually taking the time to stop and become aware of the contents of your mind, you are becoming aware of and noticing your emotions in a much more vivid fashion. It is amazing in that your ability to recognize how you feel will increase as you release your normal defenses. You will find that letting go of destructive distractions (i.e. over-eating) will make way for more thoughts about how you really feel.

- ✓ Wiping Your Mind Clean. By practicing mindfulness you are training your mind to be aware of what it is doing all the time. Instead, you will now become aware of what you are thinking in the present moments. We don't want you to empty your mind or lose your sense. You are going to be learning to use them in different ways.
- ✓ Seeking a Blissful Life. While everyone would love to live in a state of utopia thinking that they have hit upon a spiritual being higher than themselves (and God-like spiritual is not what we are talking about), we can feel that way but don't think that everyone else is struggling within their own reality. A lot of people who practice meditation become distressed when they find their minds wandering. They can feel a sense of agitation or become unsettled at the thought. If you are practicing Mindful meditation you allow pleasant states of mind to come and go not holding onto blissful states or rejecting unpleasant ones.

- ✓ Withdrawing from Life. If you practice Mindful meditation, you are not going to become a monk, a nun nor a hermit dwelling in a cave somewhere. Instead, you are experiencing moments fully one moment at a time and you are paying attention to the present.
- ✓ Escaping Pain. Practicing mindfulness meditation is not going to take away your pain completely. Rather, it is going to help you to manage it. As you go through your life, you will ultimately feel levels of physical and emotional pain. The more you experience and practice mindfulness, the more capacity you will have to understand, endure and control the pain. Painful sensations are one part of the equation and the suffering caused by the pain is another. In order to alleviate the pain from suffering you need to let go of resisting the pain, protesting the pain and the avoidance of it. This way, you can experience the pain in a moment-to-moment awareness and acceptance.