



WELL-AWARE-NESS Psychology

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Buddhist Psychologist & Mindfulness and Wisdom based Meditation Teacher John Barter Presents

‘Stress Less – Live More – Love Life’

*‘A healthy mind is the greatest gain.
Contentment is the greatest wealth. A trustworthy friend is the best of kin.
Unconditional freedom is the highest bliss.*

The Buddha: DHAMMAPADA, V.204

~ STRESS LESS ~

The Most Important Thing

- If we ask ourselves ‘What is the most important thing?’ hopefully we would answer that it is ‘Life!’
- The most important and precious thing that we have is life itself, before we can even start to talk about what’s happening in our life, we need to talk about and appreciate ‘Being Alive’.
- It is not enough just to think ‘Yes I am alive’ we need to actually ‘Feel it’. To be alive we need to ‘Feel Alive’, to ‘Feel Life’ and ‘Be Life’!
- So how alive do we feel?
- Have we ever felt more alive than we do now?
- Our contemporary culture has evolved to the point where we live exceedingly busy and fast paced lives.
- Much of our life is lived on ‘automatic’ just ‘going through the motions’; we can often find our self living our life days / weeks ahead of our self; no wonder we don’t feel connected to where we belong.
- *There is a great difference between feeling that our life is full and actually feeling fulfilled in our life.*

Stress in our Life

- *Our quality of life is not so much about what we have, and what we do, but what we feel.*
- How do we want to feel: Alive, Happy, Fulfilled, at Ease, Content, Joyous, at Peace, Free?
- These wonderful feelings are all compromised and diminished in varying degrees by STRESS.
- For the most part this stress is ‘Psychological Stress’ not physical stress; it is mentally made.
- Stress disables our dexterity; diminishes our cognitive functions; dis empowers our emotional availability, sensitivity, and quality of caring concern and connection to others.
- Stress, impacts on the health and wellness of our mind and body.
- Medical science now shows how stress can either cause or exacerbate many illnesses e.g. Skin rashes, irritable bowel syndrome, hypertension, asthma, allergies, etc.
- Stress causes activation of the neuroendocrine system that releases hormones that compromise our immune system and its healthy functioning.
- Stress can cause a depletion of the neuro transmitter Serotonin (integral to happiness), leading to depression.

Stress Less!

- Life is stressful; it has always been, is and will always be.
- Life in the twenty first century is particularly stressful and we need to find ways to manage stress or we will severely compromise the quality of our life and end up in distress and burn out.
- Much of our stress is Psychological and relates to where and how our mind stands in relation to a stressor: the issue, the illness, the pain.
- It is important to appreciate that:
How we perceive determines how we receive, which will ultimately determine and create our reality.
- Further to this point is that:
What we conceive determines how we perceive which then effects how we receive the given situation.
- Some fundamental 'Mindfulness and Wisdom based CBT can help us see the links of:
CONCEPT – the conception or thinking about something
PERCEPT – the perception or view that we take on the topic
RECEPT – the reception, receiving or taking on the particular topic
- By understanding our mind, how it works, we can both manage and develop its potential to stress less and thus function better
- Even how we can conceive, perceive and receive – 'stress' can be important.
- For example; rather than stressing about stress, we can appreciate:
Stress is - just as stressors are!
It is how we relate to the stressor or the resultant stress that is important. Thus a 'Right or Wise View' is important.
Stress can help us to ADAPT or DEVELOP as we work with what is currently challenging.
Since most of our stress is Psychological – we can adapt or develop psychological skills and qualities to accommodate or deal with either the stress or the stressor (eg. Patience, equanimity, compassion, wisdom etc.)
The alternative is to get caught in REACTING, RESISTING, DENYING or DISTRACTING – which may be understandable in the short term but in the long term are unwise and unhealthy.
- Stress may motivate us to develop mindfulness and wisdom – engaging these in our life.
- *Mindfulness is the quality needed, so we can mindfully relate to the experience rather than be caught up in our reactions to the experience.*

Mindfulness: 'The X Factor' to Stress Less – Live More – Love Life

- Mindfulness denotes is a fullness of mind, awareness, presence of mind, attention, a 'Knowing-ness'.
- Without Mindfulness we would live mindlessly, our mind fragmented, distracted, distorted, diminished.
- Mindfulness is that quality that collects and connects us to our experience, to what is going on, to our Life.
- Engaging Mindfulness means 'To Care': being Careful and being Caring i.e. engaging Mind and Heart
- Mindfulness is the added value, the added extra, the X Factor that enhances what ever we are doing or experiencing.

- The Three Provision of Mindfulness are:
Mindfulness is: Life Giving – connecting us to life here and now
Life Guiding – helping us to see with clarity and discernment
Life Guarding - it is the real health / life insurance we need.
- Elements of Mindfulness include being: Present-Centered; Attentive; Objective; Receptive; Non-Personal (not having to always take things personally).

Developing Mindfulness through Mindfulness Meditation

- Whilst we all have a degree of Mindfulness it can be developed both by using Mindfulness when we engage in our life, or more especially through the conscious exercise of Mindfulness Meditation.
- Of all the forms of Meditation, Mindfulness Meditation is the most applicable in the context of our contemporary culture given that it does not require any religious beliefs or practices to accompany it.
- Mindfulness and Mindfulness Meditation has been particularly studied and practiced for over 2,500 years through Buddhism. Mindfulness is the core teaching of the Buddha and at the heart of Buddhist Psychology. Much of the Buddha's teachings evolve out of the development of Mindfulness through meditation and revolve around the application of mindfulness in daily life for the development of wisdom and compassion.
- *Mindfulness Meditation is the practice and process of developing a quality of sustained awareness leading to both inner calm as well as insights into the nature of our mind and the cause of our emotional pain and psychological suffering.*
- Mindfulness Meditation is best practiced daily in a quiet place for approximately 30 minutes, bringing mindful attention to the body and the ongoing sensation of the breath, strengthening and stabilizing the mind.

Mindfulness and Mind-Body Medicine; Neuro-Science and Neuroplasticity

- Medical Science has recently become interested in Mindfulness, especially the new medical paradigm of Mind-Body Medicine (Pert 1999) that sees the mind and body as two parts of the one whole.
- Due to technological advancements in brain imaging (fMRI, EEGs) and the ground breaking work in the area of Neuroscience such as by Davidson (2004) research shows that our mind can change our brain.
- Neuroplasticity is the term used when neural connections change in response to experience. Neurogenesis occurs whereby new neurons grow even in adults, enhancing the structure and function of the brain.
- Mindfulness practice appears to enhance neural plasticity and especially strengthen neural connectivity in the left prefrontal cortex of the brain which significantly relates to enhanced psychological wellbeing and physical health.

Psychological Health Benefits of Mindfulness Meditation

- Research shows that exercising mindful attention through meditation enhances important regions of the brain associated with increase in positive emotions as well as quicker recovery from negative ones. (Davidson 2004)
- Mindfulness appears to enhance Serotonin reducing Depression and Anxiety; Studies show that most psychological disorders are significantly reduced through Mindfulness practice. (Siegel 2007)
- Mindfulness Practices show increase in interpersonal skills and quality of relationships (Siegel 2007)

Physical Health Benefits of Mindfulness Meditation

- Research shows that Mindfulness Meditation through the left prefrontal lobe activity enhances physical health through reduction in stress and increased immune function. (Hassad 2000, Siegel 2007)
- A great body of research by Kabat-Zinn and colleagues shows Mindfulness Practices (MBSR) reduces subjective states of suffering (especially chronic pain), improves immune function and accelerates healing.

Questions for Consideration

1. How does stress manifest for you – physically and mentally?
2. What are the main ‘stressors’ causing this stress?
3. What is your relationship to the stressors and the stress (Concept, Percept, Recept)
4. How might you be able to ‘Stress Less’?

The Buddha’s antidote to Stress

- Whilst we can appreciate the importance of Mindfulness and Meditation for the practice and purpose of reducing stress, this ultimately is not enough.
- To reduce stress in our life we need to enable and engage a whole new paradigm to live from.
- The Buddha’s teachings are fundamentally just this, a way to reduce and even eliminate stress and suffering in our life.
- The Buddha’s teachings and way of practice are summarized as: Sila, Samadhi, Panya ie. Morality or ethical living; Mental development through the practice of Meditation; Wisdom principles and approaches to life’s issues.
- It is not enough to think we can reduce stress by ‘being mindful’, we need to become wise and not be caught up in the illusion and mere appearance of things.
- The end of stress is due to the end of the illusion of being a separate, static, stable identity; someone that is stressed or that gets stressed.
- Seeing and being beyond the illusion of a separate egoic self is the end of suffering, the end of stress.
- This is the message and teachings of Realised people and teachers.
- ‘Realise Reality and Be beyond the drama!’

~ LIVE MORE ~

*‘Mindfulness is the Path to the Deathless.
Mindlessness is the path to death.
The Mindful do not die, but the mindless live as if dead already.’*

The Buddha: DHAMMAPADA, V. 21

Live More Life

- Can we live more?
- Certainly, if we reduce our stress, to stress less – then maybe we can live more?
- Maybe we can live more in three ways!
- Firstly: by using mindfulness, and practicing meditation we can enhance our health, wellbeing and longevity of life.

- Secondly: by using Mindfulness and being mindful, we can live more consciously and more where our life is happening from. Thus we can appreciate and enjoy things more fully.
- Thirdly: by using mindfulness we can develop wisdom, helping us to live more wisely and even transcend the time bound temporal world based in egoic self.

Realizing Where We Belong

- Not feeling quite alive and fulfilled, can cause us to feel estranged from our life; Not feeling connected.
- We might feel as if we don't quite belong in our self, to our self, in our life, to Life itself!
- Why is it that we feel like this? Maybe we have been 'living where, we don't belong'?
- Maybe we have been living in the wrong place?

Coming to our Senses

- How do we know we are alive?
- We know we are alive by experiencing life; not just thinking it, but seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, feeling.
- Our 5 senses are only sensitive to what is happening in the present, the NOW, this moment.
- To feel alive, to Live More, we need to 'Come to our Senses'; Metaphorically: coming to clarity, awareness; Literally: connecting with our senses, getting in touch with our direct experience not just what we think, wonder or worry about it.

Mindful Living

- If we Live Mindfully, Consciously, with awareness, with an eyes open approach to life, then we can live more of our moments with clarity.
- *Mindfulness allows us to have more of our moments in meaningful ways.*
- Mindfulness or Clarity helps us to see the nature of things, to see 'Cause and Effect', to contemplate, to Understand and to develop Wisdom.

Wise Living

- We can 'Live More' – by Living More Wisely.
- Like Mindfulness, if we live wisely then every aspect and domain of our life can be enhanced.
- Living Wisely can include – knowing how to best use our thought, speech and actions to be helpful for our self and others in our life.
- The more we engage wisdom then the less stress, angst and unease there is in our life and in the life of those that we connect with.
- Whilst as a species we have developed (even over developed) the use of thought and thinking, what is required now, even for our continued survival as a species in the use of Wisdom.
- In being wise we understand, appreciate and apply wisdom with regards to the two most precious assets of our life.
- We have appreciated that Life is the most precious thing that we have, yet Life is just the manifestation of TIME and ENERGY.
- Whilst time and energy appear perennial, they are in limitation as they manifest as our life.

- The more we are mindful and engage wisdom, we can choose not to waste our precious time and energy on stress, fear, frustration, anger or resentment.
- We would not throw money away – so why would we throw time and energy (our life) away?

Time and the creating of self in time

- In reflecting further we can see and even realize that the stress that we have which limits 'our' life is because of 'time'!
- Have we ever paused to ponder and engage some wise consideration around what is time?
- Is time, the Past, is time the Future, is time just now –the Present?
- Is time the passing of moments of Now?
- Does the Now pass or is it always Now?
- Do the Past and Future really exist or are they just memories and ideas, which only occur in the mind in the present –the Now?
- Whilst for the purpose of practical living and engaging with others, we use the 'convention' of time and the convention of Past and Future.
- Our sense of self, requires and is constructed out of both past and future; the things that 'I' have done and the things that 'I' will do.
- Have asked: 'What is our self, 'the self' without time?
- The self does not exist without time!
- So if time is merely a concept, and the past and future are not really real and if the self is made out of the concepts of past and future (the not real) then can the self be real?
- If it is only the self that experiences psychological stress and suffering, then is the stress and suffering real if the self itself is not real but just a cognitive construct continually mentally made in the present for the purpose of communicating to the outside world?
- When thinking stops there is just the mindful awareness of 'now knowing'. The now knowing of just here and just now is the eternal present, the timeless now that has no edges.
- The eternal now is not endless time, it is beyond time, no time, beyond change, aging and death.
- This the Buddha called the Amatta – the timeless; the Amara – beyond death; Nirvana – the end of suffering / samsara.
- Thus; 'who dies; what is.' By this I mean that the mind identified as a someone becomes caught into time and the things of time and thus ages and dies. Yet the 'what' that we really are is beyond time and thus beyond aging and death.
- Spiritual practice is to realize or allow the revelation of what we already always are and not be caught into the mental construct of a personal self identity, a 'who'.
- Whilst we all have a different face, façade, persona, self or who; what we all are is one and the same. Life is the possibility of realising what we really are!

Questions for Consideration

1. How can we be more mindful and be present to life just now?
2. Can we focus on what is and not get caught into worrying about what is not?
3. How have we considered how much our life is based in time, yet how real is time?
4. Have we considered how much our self is based in time?

~ LOVE LIFE ~

*If we can 'Be present to that which is present',
this then, becomes the ultimate meditation; a prayer of Love and Joy.*

The self behind the Stress and Suffering

- So maybe if there is less stress in our life and that we are living our life more mindfully and wisely, then maybe we can feel a little more at ease with our life and with Life it self?
- So how receptive are we to our experience, to what is happening, to that which is our life?
- Are we receptive to all that we are experiencing, not just the pleasant, not just that which makes us feel good about our self?
- A great deal of our precious Time and Energy can get caught in reacting and resisting what is: this is a great cause of stress is our life.
- If we ask:
Who gets stressed? Who is stressed? Who creates the stress?
- We would be right in say: "Yes – 'the Who' creates and gets stressed; 'the Who' is the issue!
- Who is the 'Who'?
- "I am the Who" – the ego, the I, egoity, the self!
- The 'I' or self that we have; yes we have a self – we don't have to be the self?(my self – not I self?) is merely a mentally constructed process and program used by the mind as a communication device.
- The self is a process and program of 'Identity' made from mental 'identification' with whatever

Seeing and Being Beyond the Stress of the Self

- Much of our sense of self is created out of a mental, emotional and behavioural reacting to the flow of life.
- The left-brained thinking created self, is formed from duality, separation and reaction, wanting and not wanting.
- This creates the duality of: Me – You; I – that, and is the opposite of 'Oneness'; a 'Non dual Awareness', no separation, no stress.
- *'All is Life and Love in disguise'* my Spiritual colleague Rahasya says!
- Everything that we are experiencing is our life; rather than Reacting-Resisting-Denying-Distracting from the unpleasant and unpleasing, we can use mindfulness to open our Mind-Heart Awareness to what is.
- Acknowledging what is
- Accepting the reality of what is
- Being with what is
- Learning from what is
- Seeing from wisdom what can be changed – when and how?
- Flowing with what is
- Being the Flow of what is!
- This allows then fundamental Joy, Love, Bliss or 'Sat – Chit – Ananda; Truth / Ultimate Reality / Existence; Consciousness; Bliss / Love / Joy.

Life is Happening

- Life is the 'Happening', not just the particular elements or issues in the 'happening'
- By 'letting go' of reacting and resisting, by letting go of identification to self; there can be a release into the 'Happening' that is the flow of Life.
- In release – there is a 'Falling into Life' which can only always be Right Now – Just Now.
- The energy that is otherwise used and spent in stressful reacting to life is enabled, allowing great health, healing and life potential.
- 'Falling into Life' is synonymous with 'Falling into Love with Life'.
- In this union, this coalescence – lover and beloved become One

Conscious Relationship to Life

- Mindful Living = a Conscious Relationship to Life; one that is not Conditioned or Conditional
- When we can be open to life in this way it creates the experience of Real Love, no conditions placed on our experience; the relationship to life becomes one of Love; of great energy, aliveness, compassion and care.
- This is the way to save energy, reduce stress, be more connected to what is; with alignment, balance, harmony, joy.
- *If we can 'Be present to that which is present', this then, becomes the ultimate meditation; a prayer of Love and joy. Here we find that the idea of being someone (a subject) attending to an experience (the object) dissolves into a oneness or unification (Samadhi). This is Atamayatta – Non Duality.*

Questions for Consideration

1. Have we at times felt that sense of being 'In – Flow' and even 'Being the Flow'?
2. What did that 'Oneness' of being totally just NOW – feel like?
3. Could we 'Let Go' of being identified as 'the self' and Fall into Life Right Now?
4. What could or is holding us back from this?

Being and Knowing rather than Doing and Thinking

- Such a conscious, unconditioned and unconditional Relationship to Life, allows the left brained thinking, worrying planning Mind, to relax its grip on our experience, providing a chance for our right brained being, knowing and feeling to be engaged.
- Being and Knowing is expressed as the quality of 'Equanimity': the balance of Compassion and Wisdom
- Equanimity is a way of being with a stressor without becoming stressed or distressed.
- Equanimity is a way of knowing the experience; this is happening, this is how it is; knowing that things do change, that pain is a part of life, and that we don't have to take things personally.
- Being and Knowing, brings our mind back to what is, rather than being caught in the reacting and resisting of what is.
- Our Life becomes the experience and expression of Presence, Peace and Joy. Here there is Learning and a Love for life. Our life becomes possible, workable even wonderful.
For what else, did we think that we are here for?

Concluding Reflections

- The real SECRET to Stress Less; Live More; Love Life, is MINDFULNESS and WISDOM
- It is not simply about getting what we want, but knowing how to experience and appreciate fully what it is we have, especially having Life and Being Alive!
- If we are to Be Well and Live Well, to feel good and function well; to have health, happiness, experience peace and joy, we can only experience these things where we are; here, now, this present moment.
- Mindfulness and Wisdom provide the foundation for calm consideration and reflection of the reality of what is and also of what is not; to see where and how our 'self' is created and caught into time and stress and a lack of joy.
- Mindfulness and Wisdom help us to arrive in our life and connect consciously and wisely to the present moment, the place and point of existence, the only place to live our life, the place to realize and live from freedom in this edgeless, boundless eternal present.

Life is truly a dream.

All of its troubles I alone create. When I stop creating, the trouble stops.

With a single mind, with an unbounded heart, we can wake up to the wonderful existence in true Emptiness that we are in the middle of right now.

When all in the world ceases to exist, only the wonderful remains.'

Bhikshu Heng Ch'Au

John Barter: is a Psychologist and Mindfulness and Wisdom based Meditation Teacher.

He brings to his work nearly 40 years of continuous practice of Mindfulness disciplines, 10 years of which he was an ordained Buddhist Monk of the Theravada Forest Tradition, living and practicing in Australia, Thailand, Britain and Europe.

John is the director of WELL-AWARE-NESS Psychology, a health practice through which clients see John for individual or couple sessions of Mindfulness and Wisdom based CBT.

Throughout the year John runs Mindfulness and Wisdom based Meditation Classes, Courses, Workshops and Retreats on the Tweed Coast of NSW.



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