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Mindful About Life

Focus, Flourish and Fly
using the science of positive psychology

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The Holidays are Coming – Don't Stress

We all know the holidays are coming. They come at the end of November every year and stick around until the beginning of January. And just as regularly as the holidays coming, many people regularly experience stress around the holidays.

If you already started thinking about your guest list for Thanksgiving or your gift list for the holidays knowing they are around the corner, you should also start thinking about dealing with the stress that, inevitably, will come as well.

In an excellent review, David Creswell and Emily Lindsay wrote that mindfulness helps best in people who are stressed. If you are not very stressed, mindfulness exercises are not going to make much of a difference. So even if you don't need mindfulness training from January to November, now might be a good time to get ready.

And the benefits of mindfulness can last year-round! Many diseases including heart problems, diabetes and even cancer and HIV can be made worse by stress. Needless to say, obesity and depression are linked to stress and stress often causes people to smoke more and partake in other unhealthy behaviors.

You may ask, "Why mindfulness?". These researchers show that when we are more mindful, different parts of our brain engage differently. When we are mindful, parts to the prefrontal cortex region of the brain get more engaged. The prefrontal cortex is where most of our thinking happens. Mindfulness also lowers reactivity in the stress processing areas of the brain. So mindfulness gives a two-pronged approach – less reactive and better thinking.

If all this is true, then the next question is how to become more mindful? Well, the simplest answer is to take a moment right now and watch your thoughts. Just a few seconds.

Did you do that? If you did, you just became more mindful. Of course, there are many more ways and many more exercises that you can do to become more mindful. For more of those, you can hire a mindfulness coach like me or just peruse my website.

My advice, DO NOT WAIT until your New Year's resolution to think about stress and mindfulness. Start now and let your New Year's resolution be to expand and deepen your practice!

HELP?!?



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