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Mindfulness and Laughter: Gaining Clarity While Giggling

By Maya Talisman Frost

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Life is funny.

Throughout the day, there are plenty of humorous moments that we tend to ignore. We get so caught up in being earnest that we miss opportunities to gain clarity while giggling.

Sure, there are times when it is considered inappropriate to laugh, but if we're honest, we'll see that if we're suppressing a smile it's a sign that we're fully present.

Not only that, but these are times when we could most use a little laughter to bring levity to an overly-serious situation. The best business meetings—and funerals—I've ever attended included plenty of bust-a-gut moments.

Years ago, during a two-week silent meditation retreat, I got the giggles. Oh, I know, you're supposed to be *serious* about meditating for five hours straight, but I couldn't help it.

It all started when I was roused from my peaceful posture by a certain "KLUNK!" from across the room. I opened my eyes to see that one of my retreat buddies had fallen asleep and landed with his head against the wall. Momentarily unnerved, he quickly straightened up, closed his eyes and put on his best meditator's face.

I, on the other hand, completely lost it.

I managed to stifle the first few giggles, but then they started escaping in little bursts. I tried the ol' coughing technique, hoping to disguise my snorts as expectoration, but I wasn't fooling anyone.

Pretty soon, I saw (well, I did have my eyes open) others looking my way. Nobody else was laughing. In fact, nobody else was even smiling. Clearly, I was the only one who had allowed myself to get caught up in that unexpected moment of hilarity.

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I was chagrined, and then annoyed, and continued to watch my response to this incident shift over the next few minutes.

Had it been funny? Of course. Were we supposed to be concentrating fully on the moment? Absolutely. Anything else would be attachment to past regrets or worries about the future.

Okay, so we were focusing on watching our thoughts, and this little interruption was not part of what was going on in our heads. But isn't ignoring what's happening around us the same kind of thing that gets us into trouble back in the Real World?

We go about our lives, obsessing silently, moving mindlessly, getting things done. We fail to notice the wonder and joy and beauty all around us because we are in full scowl mode about the things in our

heads.

Well, I'm all for taking time to laugh. Give me a giggling guru over a dour taskmaster every time. The greatest guides—in business, education, and personal success—are those who encourage us to invite hilarity into our lives whenever it happens to appear.

Open your eyes to the silliness around you, and laugh out loud. It's good for your heart in every way.

Maya Talisman Frost is a mind masseuse offering specialized mindfulness training in Portland, Oregon. She teaches eyes-wide-open ways to get calm, clear and creative. To subscribe to her free weekly ezine, the Friday Mind Massage, visit <http://www.MassageYourMind.com>

The Art of Conscious Living

By Yvonne Chiarelli, PdD

The Art of Conscious Living by Yvonne Chiarelli, PdD

Mindfulness is an ancient Buddhist practice that has profound relevance for today. It is relevant because mindfulness is a practice of being consciously awake, experiencing the fullness of the present moment, and living in harmony with yourself and the world. The practice of mindfulness allows you to cultivate an appreciation for experiencing your life as you are living it. One of its effects is an increased ability to see the extraordinary in the mundane. Mindfulness has to do with being in touch and seeing what is so.

Practicing mindfulness is simple but not easy. Mindfulness is paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally. It requires a mental discipline to

wake up in each moment, and to keep waking up for each oncoming moment. This kind of extraordinary quality of attention requires effort. It requires such effort because you are almost programmed to forget, or you succumb to unawareness, or wish to become deliberately unaware. The use of medicants of all kinds is prevalent in our culture ranging from drugs, over busi-ness, TV watching, and other activities that tend to narrow our attention.

The power of mindfulness is in its practice and everyday applications. Applying mindfulness as a strategy can have significant positive outcomes on the job. How many times have you wasted time because you forgot to take something with you? How many times did you respond just a bit inappropriately because you weren't fully listening? Did you actually experience your lunch? How many times did that tiny forgotten detail cause more effort than necessary?

Mindfulness is empowering because it cultivates greater awareness, clarity, and acceptance of the present moment reality. Mindfulness as a work or life strategy:

- > Saves time
- > Increases memory retention
- > Preserves integrity
- > Improves performance
- > Improves perception.

Who wouldn't like that? Successful people are highly skilled in using their focused attention on their activity, even if they spend little time on that activity. They can efficiently absorb, process, and discern and at very high rate when focusing their deep and mindful attention.

I challenge you to be fully awake, aware, focused in the present, and see the extraordinary in the mundane for the next two hours. Be ever vigilant that you are paying attention.

There are many resources on mindfulness at your local or virtual bookseller. Here are two that I can recommend:

1. Wherever You Go, There You Are : Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life by Jon Kabat-Zinn
2. The Miracle of Mindfulness : A Manual on Meditation -- by

Thich Nhat Hanh, Mobi Ho (Translator)

Having a personal support team is a great way to keep you on track. You can also use a coach to help you reach your goals on personal growth and your desire to handcraft a life of choice.

By Yvonne Chiarelli. Yvonne is a professional coach providing personal support, clarity, and strategy through collaborative relationship. For more information, visit her website at:

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