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Mindfulness and Mammaries: Grinning With Gratitude

By Maya Talisman Frost

Mindfulness and Mammaries: Grinning With Gratitude

by: **Maya Talisman Frost**

I am truly inspired by a most mindful group of breast cancer survivors. Referring to themselves as "The Golden Mammaries", these women gather weekly to support each other, share stories, and mostly, to laugh. In their fifties and sixties, they've lived through cancer—some more than once—and they never miss their cue to grin.

Picture this: white hair, no hair, carefully-coiffed hair, wigs. Pale faces, robust and beaming faces, tense and drawn faces, I'm-at-peace faces. Pink ribbons, Race For The Cure sweatshirts, designer blouses, colorful tunics. Sensible Birkenstocks, knee-high suede boots, running shoes, clogs.

These women come from all walks of life, but this is one walk they share, holding hands along the way and skipping whenever they get a chance.

Despite scalp-scalding radiation, gut-churning chemo, hold-your-breath biopsies, painful surgeries, and unspeakable fear, the "Golden Mammaries" are riding high. They know what really matters, and they laugh their heads off at everything else.

There's a trick they use to keep things light. Whenever they hear the word "memory", they mentally replace it with "mammary". So, if they hear someone say, "I have many happy memories" they would simply change that to "I have many happy mammaries."

It has a way of making you grin. Happy mammaries? Now, there's a perky mental image! Think of a pair of smiley faces. How uplifting!

Sad memories? Sad mammaries. Droopy. Down-turned. Moping.

Losing your memory? Losing your mammary. Heck, many of these women have lost their mammaries—and all have lost good friends. If they can laugh about this, it should be a piece of cake for

the rest of us!

By using this simple mindfulness technique, these women have given themselves a cue that will prompt them to be grateful for all the good things they have to celebrate. Using a key word—and in this case, a particularly charged one—empowers them to attach a positive concept to one that has become associated with fear and pain.

We don't have to wait to find our own key word. If you have a body part, a place, a holiday, or anything else that prompts a negative gut reaction, take charge of it. Intentionally choose a new positive word or concept and attach the two in your mind. Use your custom association whenever you hear, see or say that word.

Look for humor. Search for silliness. Grab hold of every opportunity to replace fear or anger with something far more healing—laughter.

Cancer survivors are often described as courageous, but every one I've talked to has said the same thing: you simply rise to the occasion. Every one of us has that potential to be bold, brave, wise and lighthearted in the face of uncertainty. We have the power to gain perspective, the will to ignore petty differences and the open heart capable of ceasing judgment of others.

Why not start now?

Don't wait for a diagnosis. Seize your own destiny and start being courageous today. Use mindfulness to help you move forward with gratitude and start perfecting that lusty laugh of yours.

Thanks for the mammaries.

Maya Talisman Frost is a mind masseuse offering specialized mindfulness training in Portland, Oregon. Her work has inspired thinkers in over 100 countries. To subscribe to her free weekly ezine, the Friday Mind Massage, visit

<http://www.mindmasseuse.com>

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maya@mindmasseuse.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: <http://www.goalminderplus.com> Free subscriptions to e–Letters are available. ©2002 Yvonne Chiarelli

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