Minding Mendocino

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Acknowledging

We turn towards that which is pleasant and turn away from that which is unpleasant. This is a fundamental trait of life when we look at the world. Every infant knows this; every plant, animal, and bacteria. Humans, however complicated we can be, share this simple trait with most every other organism on the planet. It is only in our complication that this very fundament of being alive can become a problem. Leave it to humans!

In the last article, we discussed some basic Mindfulness tools and definitions. One of the premises of mindfulness practice is the gentle acknowledging and acceptance of what is. Well, in order to know “what is” we have to turn towards it. We have to look at it, examine it, and give it a name. We have to allow it to tell us about itself in whatever manner it has to communicate. Sometimes this communication is through bodily sensations, even pain. Sometimes it is through emotions, even tears. These experiences are often very difficult, yet to transform a discomfort we must first face it in some way.

Many people I have worked with have told me that they have attempted to ignore their grief, hide their trauma, or avoid thinking about their shame. This is ok, and very understandable. Sometimes we can do this for an entire lifetime, and still have some good times. However, those issues cannot simply go away. We are not acknowledging them. Turning away from them because they cause us discomfort does not allow them to heal. It is natural to want to turn away, and as complicated beings we are given this choice. It is not uncommon for people to carry such things to the grave; to never acknowledge them. Healing, after all, can be a difficult and courageous act.

Yet, these issues do come out. They come out in depression, chronic anger, addictions. They come out in inflexibility with others, and anxiety regarding life. They come out in family arguments, and even judgements towards those who ARE trying to heal and get well. And, they will continue to come out in various ways until they are finally turned towards and acknowledged. Until they are finally allowed to share, speak, and be heard they will continue to yell from deep inside of us. And when we can find a way to mindfully turn towards these uncomfortable aspects of ourselves we can transform the way they feel. We can change the way they interact with our lives and the lives of those around us.

Beginning a formal and informal mindfulness practice can be one way of beginning to address healing or discomfort. Other ways of beginning to acknowledge and accept something uncomfortable would be to reach out to a safe person to talk about it. Some people express these types of experiences through writing, art, dancing, or music. The point is that whatever we choose to do, we do it directly and consciously related to our “uncomfortable issue” so that we know the connection is related. We know we are acknowledging and finally beginning the healing process. If there is something you would like to read about, it can appear in this very paper in the future. Just write Long Valley Health Center, PO Box 870, Laytonville, CA 95454, Attn: Jessi Maness