

Held Lightly

People often ask me
You teach mindfulness~do you meditate, have a practice?
I usually pause, and reply like this, 'Well, I used to.....'
You see it's a difficult question
In my view, there are no rules in meditation
It's more about understanding than sitting or walking
I don't use meditation stools or zafus any more
Once I did a lot, but not now for sure
Reading their minds I can sense their feelings
A teacher of mindfulness who doesn't sit~what's he thinking?!
It's a good point and one's apt to inject
'Meditation~it's not what you think!'
Clever on a T-shirt, but makes the spirit sink

Let's think.....
To be mindful, to meditate means being aware
Paying attention with care
For me, there are no bells, ohms, icons or jossticks
No tools, techniques or tricks
No floating on a lotus becalmed
No special time or place beyond harm
Nor smiles beatifically on face
None of it really needs to take place
But to be fair, I do see stuff when I'm being aware
Noticing, Observing, Witnessing
N-O-W spells 'NOW'.... now we're talking!
Meditating for real

Noticing what's going on in my head and body
Inside me and out there with you
The present moment~morning, noon~night time too!
Drifting to the past and future, getting in a stew
Ordinary everyday life~all the trivia~changes and strife
Everything the mind thinks, feels and senses
Allowing the lense of mindfulness to focus
Anywhere, any time
No announcing, sitting or walking to stay in line
Awareness of breath~the fact of breathing
How about you, are you breathing?
Good! you're alive, being mindful of one thing
Asking the question peels the mind's eye
And there you are, with sudden insight
'Breathing is good for me~respiration with a sigh!'

Reading the screen of the phone I'm holding
I notice the grip, words unfolding
Expressions on faces

Awareness of beauty, peace and places
Tons more in life to perceive
Like the itch on my foot I can't relieve
The creature that's almost too small to see, crawling across the floor in front
of me
Predictive text misspelling my poem (hilarious and dangerous at the same
swine - I mean time!)
Vapour trails in the sky above
Riding my bike as the chain flies off
Birds screeching overhead
Gut wrenching flash-backs of the lost, the dead

The breeze caressing my face and hands
Crunching underfoot on pebbled strand
Thumping gym beats gathered to compete
Understanding what someone's saying
Getting it wrong and paying
Trying to do things right and stay in the light
Checking for an email that won't come all night
Priding myself on something I've written, or said or made or done
Beating myself up for something I've written, said or made or done
'Such is life' ~ said my Mum
Noticing what the mind says~the stories it tells
The trouble I get into~hell's bells!
Not forgetting, forgetting

All living's an opportunity for awareness
That's meditation remember, when we're not being careless
Or even when we are, being mindful of that
Try not to run over, the cat!
Using our senses, allowing all to be
With Patience, Open-Mindedness, Trusting, Non-Striving you see
Accepting, Letting Go, Non-Judging, the other three
These are the seven pillars of mindfulness, of course!
It would be great if we could be more like that~I should go on a course!
But let's be honest, this awareness we call mindfulness comes and goes
Moment by moment..... by moment.... by moment
Good, bad, in-between, these mental events are all there to be seen
When we notice, they tell us we're alive
Not necessarily that all's well
But well, this is the way it is~going live~to be living

Is there an off-switch through meditation?
No, sorry there's not!
If you turn to face your life as it is, there's no escape or avoidance, it is as it is
For instance try this....
See that red open top sports car, being driven by the giraffe with the pink
flowing scarf?
See it? Red car, giraffe, scarf.... Got it?.....
Now get rid of it! Can you do that?

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Not for long ~ it always comes back full on, strong  
Try to stop thought as you think you ought  
And you'll find it floats back, putting you back on the rack  
If you understand this, you'll soon realize the truth of non-doing  
Oh, and it's not a prize

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So I don't try any more
I don't aim to be mindful or seek change and improvement
I've given it up, it's a job I don't need
Sowing the seed of mindful living ~ my guide to life
I notice my thoughts about the future, the past
I notice they all pass, quite fast
Sometimes I can see and allow them to be
At others I struggle and get in a muddle being mindful of all this
All this stuff of which to be mindful, I want to be mindful
With all it's faults, foibles and frissons
I want to be mindful all the time, from now on
But, 'I want doesn't get', my Mum also said
You know that and nothing is perfect, although we want it so

Even when you're not being mindful, guess what, you're being mindful!
How do we know that?
You think it, there's a thought, 'I'm not being mindful'
And knowing you're thinking that thought... Well that's being mindful!
So there's a lot more awareness than we think, don't you think?
Despite all this awareness~sad to say
Your head won't empty or go blank some day
Your thoughts, feelings, sensations won't stop~leave the room~any time soon

And yes, it's hard to accept the way it is
We always want more, get into a fight
To try and find a permanent light
Until that is, the lifeguard of mindfulness
Gathers us up and shows us all there is
To Notice, Observe, Witness, to be aware of
I'm very grateful for moments of understanding~it's a thrill
More helpful than any amount of sitting still

If someone's just beginning and wants to understand
Learning to sit for practice is a great start
As long as they see, it's not the whole art
Meditation guidance is good advice
Attending courses and retreats are fine
It's just~watch out! Too much practice and not enough understanding
Can lead to a lot of doing mindful standing~ still
And very little being mindful of the moving~ wheel

Being mindful is meditation
Meditation is awareness
Awareness is survival
Survival is being mindful in everyday life

So yes, I admit it, I don't do it~not in the usually expected sense anyway~yet I
still teach mindfulness
Being mindful of life~meditating on life
I look for understanding
I look at being alive
I look through the light of mindfulness

Held lightly

Are you breathing?

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