

It's never easy giving talks about mindfulness....

After Dinner

I'm giving an after dinner talk on mindfulness
Twenty very boisterous, loud and 'menish' men
Quite an experience, I can tell you
Bit late in the day for me ~ it's nine ten
I'm sitting at the top table
 Like being at a public school bash
That's how it seems anyway
Lots of ritual, for them habitual
Fairly alien to my way
Feel a bit out of place
 I'll be mindful

Been here upstairs at the restaurant since seven thirty
I'm tired already
 haven't even started the talk yet
One by one cheerily they arrive
And I'm introduced by the gentleman Chairman
Most of them met earlier at the pub
Pretty well oiled and up for fun
I notice I'm a bit dry, apprehensive maybe? slightly agitated?
Could do with a few drinks myself
The water's good though!
 I'm mindful

Three courses interspersed with business, toasting the queen and spirited
ribbing
It gets so loud I can hardly hear what anyone's saying
I'm smiling, nodding ~ barely eating
 lip reading as best I can
At the same time I feel a bit strange
Nothing can be changed
 I'll be mindful

Finally, the meal concludes and in a frenzy of high-jinx, a new member of their
inner-circle is sworn in
Then we have a 'comfort break' before the talk
A man standing next to me in the gents leans close and says,
"Take no notice, they're really keen to hear about mindfulness".
"Oh!", I say, "I'm not sure, I think I might be the comedy act!"
He says, "No really, we're looking forward to it".
"Thanks", I say
but inwardly, I'm feeling distinctly dubious, slightly bilious
 and I'm mindful

As we begin the presentation, I start by sharing my misgivings, mindfully

We all have a laugh as I say what I feel I've let myself in for, and there's quite a bit of heckling
Just like a comedy club, by my reckoning
Especially when I add,
"This is great ~ so many men together ~ I usually have an audience of women!"
A joker instantly comes back with,
"You must be a babe-magnet, can we come to one of those?!"
let's be mindful

Then there's a hushed silence as I ask,
"Would it be alright if we do a brief guided mindful meditation?"
Amazingly, they go along with this, quietly...
and afterwards they chat away, sharing their experience and observations and it just flows
I forget that I really don't want to be here
Would rather take myself off to a darkened room somewhere
I'm mindful

There are so many interesting, perceptive and probing questions
My timing, which is usually spot-on, flies right out the window
I end up rushing the closing and it's all the more funny and distracting when I notice they're starting to take a collection for the drinks!
the restaurant staff want to close up, I think
I finish the talk somewhat bemused
to thunderous applause
Not sure of the cause
being mindful?

It's fine, there are a lot of appreciative comments
and in time people drift away
One man in particular who has asked some very sharp questions and seems to know a bit about the subject
is saying thanks and goodbye
So I ask him what he does for a living
Looking away, sheepish, not very giving
"GP" he says!
"Oh!" I say,
thinking ~ "Right?! OK. Mindful of that!"

Walking home, the riotous noise of the evening still ringing in my ears
I'm mindful on reflection of all that has happened
As one person said that night,
"Anyone can be mindful, given permission"
it's true
Despite all the hilarity, judging and distraction
We did give ourselves permission
to be mindful too

A day later, I get a call from the keen daughter of one of the men

She'd heard it was good
Would I give the talk again?
to a group of Osteopaths?
"Of course!" I say "Yes"
"Women and men in equal measure?"
"It'd be a pleasure!"
"It won't be after dinner?"
"Even better!"

