

Recommended Reading

Govinda, Lama Anagarika (1976) **Creative Meditation and Multi-Dimensional Consciousness**. Wheaton, Illinois. Quest Books.

Shapiro, Shauna L., and Carlson, Linda E. (2009) **The Art and Science of Mindfulness**. Washington, D.C. American Psychological Association.

Siegel, Daniel J. (2011) **Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation**. New York, New York. Bantam Books.

Taylor, Jill Bolte (2006) **My Stroke of Insight**. London, England. Penguin Books.

Thurston, Mark (2005) **Willing to Change: The Journey of Personal Transformation**. Rancho Mirage, CA. We Publish Books.

A Model of the Two Sides of Our Brain:
Horizontal Integration

From A Whole New Mind

By Daniel H. Pink

- The brain is a very complex system. It consists of over 100 billion cells which create a network of connections that guide all of our conscious and unconscious actions. The brain is divided into two regions that work together to play a role in everything we do. However, the two hemispheres of our brain take significantly different approaches to guiding our actions, to understanding ourselves and our reaction to events.
- Understanding the strengths and the functions of both sides of the brain assists the mediator in strengthening his or her personal and professional disputes resolution skills and assists the mediator in guiding his or her clients successfully through the mediation process.

We can distill several key differences between the left and right brain functions:

1. The left hemisphere controls the right side of the body; the right hemisphere controls the left side of the body.

- a. Our brains are “contralateral,” which means that each half of the brain controls the opposite half of the body.
- b. Roughly 90% of the population is right-handed which means that the left hemisphere is controlling important movements such as handwriting, eating, etc.

2. *The left hemisphere is sequential; the right hemisphere is simultaneous.*

- a. The left hemisphere is particularly good at recognizing and controlling events that occur one after the other. This includes verbal activities such as talking, understanding the speech of other people, reading and writing.
- b. The right hemisphere has the ability to interpret things simultaneously. This side of the brain can see many things at once (e.g., grasping all the parts of a geometric shape; interpreting faces or seeing all the elements of a situation and understanding what they mean).
- c. The right hemisphere is the “picture”; the left hemisphere is the “thousand words.”

3. *The left hemisphere specializes in text; the right hemisphere specializes in context.*

- a. The left hemisphere can understand the meaning of words. The right hemisphere understands the meaning behind the words.
- b. The left hemisphere handles what is said; the right hemisphere handles how it was said.
- c. Neither side of the brain can do the job of understanding and using language without the other. We need the text of our lives to be in context.

4. *The left hemisphere analyzes the details; the right hemisphere synthesizes the big picture.*

- a. In general, the left hemisphere analyzes information. It operates in a more logical, analytic, computer-like fashion. The left converges on a single answer. It focuses on categories and can grasp details.
- b. The right side of the brain specializes in synthesis; it is good at putting isolated elements together to perceive things as a whole. The right

diverges into gestalt, it focuses on relationships; It can see the big picture.

- c. Analysis and synthesis are two of the most fundamental ways of interpreting information. Both are essential for human reasoning – but they are guided by different parts of the brain.

5. *Our left brain is responsible for conscious learning; our right brain controls “non-conscious” learning.*

- a. Our left brain focuses our attention on one perception at a time, consciously learning new things and then storing that information (to a large extent) in our unconscious.
- b. Our right brain is also taking in information at all times, but at a non-conscious level. We are subtly affected by, registering, and processing “unattended information” at all times. This information includes survival instincts that we have inherited from our distant ancestors; cultural and family beliefs and customs; and our unique experiences, including personal traumas, achievements, fears, hopes, and expertise.
- c. As we become more aware of the “non-conscious, unattended information” that permeates our thoughts, attitudes, feelings and action, we gain understanding, empathy, and equanimity. Our decisions are more directed, purposeful and impactful.
- d. A very effective method to achieve self-awareness is through understanding and utilizing mindfulness practices.

Definitions of Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally. (Jon Kabat-Zinn)

Meditation is a practice of concentrated focus upon a sound, object, visualization, the breath, movement, or attention itself. Its purpose is in to increase awareness of the present moment, reduce stress, promote relaxation, and enhance growth.

Mindfulness meditation is a practice in which distracting thoughts and feelings are not ignored but instead acknowledged and observed nonjudgmentally as they arise in order to detach from them and gain insight and awareness.

Highlights from *The Art and Science of Mindfulness* by Shapiro and Carlson

Mindfulness is, at its essence, an experiential process. It involves being aware of our physical body, emotions, thoughts, and intentions in each moment. It is the ability to “stand back” from what is happening – both inside ourselves and outside ourselves – and gain a perspective about both, by watching what is arising in us and around us, becoming aware of how that experience is affecting us, and by watching and observing ourselves as the experience recedes. This process involves awareness, circumspection, discernment, and remembering. Mindfulness is the capacity to pay attention to our inner and outer experiences with care and discernment.

Mindfulness can be thought of as both a process (as in mindful practices) and as an outcome (as in mindful awareness).

Mindful Awareness is fundamentally a way of being. This quality of being embraces all experience - whether positive, negative, or neutral - with an open,

receptive, and non-judgmental frame of mind. It is not about resigning ourselves to situations that are unjust or difficult. Mindful acceptance means being aware of what is actually happening in our inner and outer world without pushing that experience away or clinging to it. This kind of acceptance – which is simply being with what is actually happening without the overlay of reflexive conditioned responses – allows us to see a situation more clearly, discern what is needed, and respond in a more appropriate and skillful way.

Mindful Practices are methods we can employ that lead to and deepen mindful awareness. These practices help us develop the skills of focused attention, reduced reactivity, greater discernment and compassion, and greater ability to recognize and identify with interconnectedness rather than separateness.

Intention, Attention and Attitude are three interwoven elements that comprise a good working model for understanding the “why” and the “how” of mindful practices.

Setting an “intention” for a mindfulness practice answers the question “Why do it?” Our intention sets the stage for what is possible by reminding us why we are engaging in the practice in the first place. An intention helps to create a personal vision for the practitioner and a goal for our practice. For example, we may engage in a mindfulness practice to reduce stress, to become more empathetic, for self-exploration, or to become more selfless. Intentions also make our values more transparent, bringing clarity to those values and helping us determine how helpful or “life-enhancing” our values are. Intentions therefore, also answer the question of “Are my values supporting my personal growth and that of others?”

The second component of a mindfulness practice is “attention.” Attention is the ability to focus on the surrounding world as well as the contents of our own consciousness as they arise in each moment. This means learning how to cultivate a quality of attending to what is happening both in our inner world and

in the outer world in a way that is discerning and nonreactive, sustained and concentrated. In this way, we begin to see more clearly what is happening in each moment without a reflexive conditioned overlay.

“Attitude” is the third interwoven component of a mindfulness practice. *How we attend* to our experience is also important. Attending with a spirit of curiosity, openness, acceptance and love “warms” our attention and engages our heart in the process of mindfulness practices. The Chinese character for mindfulness is composed of two ideograms: presence and heart. Bringing an attitude of compassion, understanding, patience, and love into our meditation practice creates a practice that is heartfelt and heartfelt.

Mindful Meditations

Breathing Meditation:

Find a comfortable place to sit quietly. Assume a sitting position that is relaxed yet upright and alert. Focus your attention on your breath, feeling your breathing in and breathing out. Feel the rise and fall of your abdomen, the touch of air in your nostrils, the expansion and contraction of your lungs. Whenever some other thought or feeling enters your consciousness, note it, and then gently bring your mind back to your breathing. If any reaction occurs, such as enjoying what arose in your mind, or feeling irritated by it, simply note the enjoyment or irritation with kindness, and again return to the experiencing of your in-breath and out-breath.

Try to engage this practice for 5 minutes each day, relaxing more and more deeply into the awareness of your breathing.

Affirmation Meditation:

This meditation can be done while sitting still as in the Breathing Meditation, walking slowly, or lying down. Begin by focusing on your in-breath and out-breath. Relax into your breathing by not trying to control it but just

watching it. After a period of time, move your attention from your breath to an affirmation. Your affirmation can be an intention you are holding, a core value that is important to you, a special quote that has a resonance for you, or a word or phrase that has a special appeal for you.

Slowly repeat the words of the affirmation to yourself. This can be done silently or aloud, in a soft voice. Focus your attention on the words and their meaning. Take several in and out breaths as you continue to repeat the words to yourself.

Now begin to move your attention from the words and your understanding of those concepts to how you would feel if you were living your understanding of those concepts. For example, if your affirmation is “I want be of service to others” begin to drop into the feeling of what it would be like for you to be living in the spirit of those words. How would you feel if you were living your ideal of service? You can place your hand on your heart to help you move the affirmation from words to feeling. Stay with the feeling. When distracting thoughts or feelings come into your awareness, use those distractions to take you more deeply into the understanding and feeling of your affirmation. For example, if you become distracted thinking about someone in your life, come back to your affirmation of being of service to others, and think about how you could be of service to the person you are thinking about. Gently move your attention back to your affirmation this way.

Movement Meditation:

Movement Meditation invites us to be fully present in our bodies during the meditation practice. In moving our bodies – to music, chanting, a mantra, or in silence – we invite the wisdom of our physical bodies to come into our awareness. This wisdom may manifest in many ways. Perhaps there is a physical problem that is in need of our attention; perhaps we have stored an emotion or thought pattern deep within the cells of our bodies. Physical movement invites an awareness of these patterns to rise to the surface of our awareness where we can take notice of them and work constructively with them.