

THE POWER OF PRESENCE: Mindfulness as a Path To Authenticity

It's an old and ironic habit of human beings to run faster when they've lost their way."

-Rollo May, American Psychologist

A journey to authenticity is not a series of stepping-stones onto which we walk, but more like an ocean crossing where there is no path, only a direction. It's a courageous, wholehearted journey across uncharted waters, discovering meaning through earnest engagement and self-discovery. The journey is inherently uncertain, requiring a brave dedication rather than rigid planning or speed. The voyage is like an expedition that tests the core elements of our existence. Each individual must navigate waters that have no path to discover who they are and what truly matters to them. It's a journey of coming home to your true self, and it is this journey that changes everything.

The modern tendency is to move quickly through life. Speed, however, can become a defense mechanism that prevents genuine engagement and self-discovery. While speed undoubtedly has benefits, when it becomes all-consuming it prevents us from stopping to see who we really are. This frenetic pace can lead to a kind of amnesia, where we lose sight of what is truly important—our relationships, our vulnerabilities, and the slower cycles that give life clarity, deep fulfillment, and meaning.

"The antidote to exhaustion," says the poet David Whyte, "is not necessarily rest but wholeheartedness...To have a firm persuasion in our work and life—to feel that what we are doing is right for ourselves and good for the world at the exactly same time—is one of the great triumphs of human existence." To slow down and realize this conquest requires connecting to our authentic self through the voyage of self-discovery.

Central to this authentic journey is mindfulness - the practice of inhabiting one's thoughts, emotions, and surroundings without judgment or distraction. Mindfulness is about slowing our lives down to the speed of life. It's about connecting us to our inner, hidden nature that brings richness and light to the darkness of mere existence. Mindfulness is the art of being present, a practice of

meeting each moment with awareness and acceptance. It isn't simply about relaxation—it is intentional living, a way of choosing to experience life wholeheartedly. Life begins to flourish when we meet ourselves with openness and acceptance.

When we show up grounded in the present moment, we can appreciate the emerging authentic journey. To live authentically is to recognize the creative power we hold in shaping our experience rather than simply reacting to it. By awakening to the profound power within presence, we become curators of our own transformative journey, fostering deeper relationships, greater meaning, and the capacity to navigate life's stresses with wisdom and compassion, thus becoming instruments for transforming the world around us.

For a deeper conversation about the relationship between authenticity and mindfulness, I hope you will join me for an evening of conversation on Thursday, February 19 from 7:00-8:30 pm at the Shaganappi Community Association Hall (2516 14 Avenue SW, Calgary). Join us for tea at the hall at 6:30.

Register at: wtm.thebreathproject.org