

Pathways

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*"No mistakes, no experience;
no experience, no wisdom."*

Stanley Goldstein

"There are no mistakes"

**iPEC Foundation
Coaching Principle**

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Confluent Points

I absolutely love those sublime moments of clarity and insight that are provided by our journey through life. Sometimes, if we are present enough to notice, the universe can do magic in, through, and around us without us ever really intending an event to happen.

Let me see if I can explain. As you know I am a life coach, and as such my goal is to provide my clients a vehicle through which they can find energetic balance in their lives.

In another aspect of my life, I am a martial artist, and good martial arts is all about understanding balance. In yet another part of my life I am a nature photographer and a truly great photograph has a Zen-like simplicity and balance to it. Turn another page and I am a poet, wherein I seek to find the exact words necessary to convey an insight or emotion. If the words are not balanced, the poem does not work. Most recently, I have become a student of Traditional Chinese Medicine, which as far as I can tell at this rudimentary stage of my learning, is all about creating homeostatic and energetic balance for our clients using needles, herbs and/or body work.

So I am going somewhere with this right?

Absolutely.

Acupuncture needles access the energetic meridians of the patient and enable the smooth flow of the energy through the body. One of the intentions is to clear away energy blocks and bring the body closer to a state of balance, from which a patient can live a more productive life.

Curiously enough, that's exactly what

we do in coaching. We coach using verbal acupuncture. The intention is exactly the same: To clear away the energy blockages and toxic thoughts that undermine our ability to move through life with our greatest potential unleashed.

When I think about my own life, I have often said that I seek meaning and purpose, but more recently, as I look back over the years, with all their lessons, I see a man working to find and/or maintain balance and using a variety of vehicles to do so.

So I'd like to share with you the sublime moment that led to this article.

I was talking with one of the senior students in our program about my classes this quarter and she made a one-word comment: "Fantastic!" That single word cut through to the core of my resistance. It was beautiful, it was perfect, the word sliced through to the very heart of something I had not noticed lurking quietly within me.

In that moment, I had a very clear insight and a great sense of peace about the semester, purely and simply because an energy block had been released by a single word.

In that moment, I was the willing participant in verbal acupuncture. The word needle was precise, totally on target and powerful in its effect.

As with most energetic log-jams, once you remove it, there are several other trickle-down effects as more 'stuff' flows downstream to the ocean.

All that was required was for two people to meet in a confluent moment and for the recipient of the gift to be open aware, and grateful.

Your turn... ☺

Mindfulness

As I look around me, I see a world of almost frenetic activity. I wonder about all of this. What happened to quiet?

We fill our lives with work, with entertainments, with diversions, with food, with exercise, with relationships, and all the time we load on more stress and drive ourselves further from harmony.

From what are we hiding?

There are times that even the pursuit of peace and quiet takes on almost manic proportions. "I've got to find more time to meditate. I have to carve out some time this weekend when I can just let go."

What an interesting statement. There is an urgency and almost a degree of panic attached to the words.

But what is even more true, is that wherever you go...you are sure to find that you are right there. So it's not about the act of letting go. Or finding more time, or carving out time...in all of these events we just take ourselves along for the ride.

Being mindful isn't about carving out time, or being quiet. Being mindful in the moment, like pretty much everything we do on a repetitive basis is a learned skill. Being mindful is an acquired action.

So what do I mean?

Being mindful is simply learning to observe self as self interacts with the world in its myriad ways.

Well, no it isn't...Being mindful is doing the observing, but letting go of the need to compare and assess what is being observed.

So, am I being mindful yet? Am I observing? How am I doing? You already know the answers...yes? If you ask the question, then the answer is already clear.

When the questions fade away and you simply watch yourself move through life, falling over, standing back up, climbing,

succeeding, learning, growing, sharing, moving...learning grace...and you do it without judging yourself, then you are being mindful.

It's tricky stuff, kind of like wrestling with a well-oiled pig. Tricky to keep a hold on.

Like many types of practice, the moment that you notice yourself doing it, you lose it. Being mindful is a learned skill because as you practice awareness in the moment, you become aware that you are, in fact being aware moment-by-moment and then you make a judgment about it... "Hey, I'm being mindful...how cool is that?" And it's back to square one.

But that's O.K. too, because like any physical exercise, the more you practice it, the better you become at it. The mind is no different.

What is happening here is that you are exercising your brain in ways that might be novel for you. The brain is simply a physical structure that produces output. The output is what we call 'mind' in all its many forms.

So when we become mindful, we are simply training our brains to produce a different type of output. Put another way, we are modifying our process to produce a new outcome and, perhaps, stop producing older outcomes.

So how about an analogy? Let's say I start going to the gym to exercise...that's a new activity that creates a new output. By going to the gym, however, I am not sitting on my couch watching movies, so I am changing a process and altering established outputs by replacing them with new outputs. The result becomes an increased desire for more of one thing over another, and if the process sticks, I improve my physical well-being.

To carry the analogy a tad further...if I start exercising more and sitting on my couch less, then I might also acquire the unintended (at least initially) outcome of

snacking less. Then my snack budget decreases and I start buying more healthy foods, which also feeds into my physical well-being and now I am into a summation of causes and a more rapid progress towards my intended goal, which was to get fit.

Do you see how the process played out?

So, back to being mindful.

The first steps are simply showing up with an intent, and seeing how it goes. The next part is persistence. Part of being mindful is looking past the mixed results and not judging yourself for not being present in the moment...

Or even judging yourself for judging yourself for not being present in the moment. Remember wrestling the pig?

So here then, is a possible path:

Simply offer the intent to be more aware, moment-by-moment of moving through life.

So much of what we do is in the unconscious program realm, and even the things we think we are doing consciously are often well-practiced programs running themselves.

Secondly, make the intent to simply observe without the need to assess or compare how you are doing.

That's tricky, because, especially here in the West we are taught to do this at a very early age. We live in a world of comparisons. But simply being aware that much of what we do is assessing and comparing and judging, can be liberating, because you can catch yourself doing it...then you have an opportunity to create a different outcome.

So to wrap up then, being mindful isn't some ethereal practice, it is simply exercising your brain in ways to which it might not be accustomed.

Set the intent and keep showing up. It's just like any other form of training exercise...

Wait, that was a comparison. ☺

“ For Everything you have missed you have gained something else. ”

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

Mind Fullness

I would like to continue my thread a little bit from the last article and take it a little bit further.

In these days of internet technology, information overload and fast-paced computing, there is a lot going on in the background of our computers about which we are blissfully unaware.

Unaware that is, till it all comes crashing down. If you think about your computer for a moment, there are bunches of programs all running simultaneously, some of which do not play nicely together. Additionally, we have bunches of old files that we could delete, and slowly over time our computer processor starts to get sluggish. The computer takes longer to load documents, and execute commands. And programs get quirky.

Our brains are not so dissimilar. We fill our minds with information at an incredible pace because we have limited attention spans, and are continually seeking new stimuli. Ultimately though, how much of it do we use to build our highest, best self? How often do we function at our peak potential?

The purpose of what I do as a life coach is to help my clients draw out their highest potential for themselves. My clients seek to operate at their best and to discover what is hidden within, once all the surface noise and clutter of a lifetime's messages have been cleared away. Of course very few of my clients come right out and say that (at least initially), but that's what is at the heart of the coaching relationship. Think of it like a hard drive clean up.

As we grew up, we accepted programs and data from all manner of sources. We picked up messages about who we are from our families, our friends, our cultures, and even our own perceptions of what we saw in the mirror. Some of these data were accurate at the time, some were totally inaccurate then and now, but nonetheless we

stored the information and we kept on playing the programs, until they became habitual, *and invisible*.

Slowly, over time, our inner genius and highest potentials became masked by the messages that we took on board and came to believe.

So to bring back the last article on mindfulness, the process of clearing away the clutter is partly a function of simply becoming aware, then making the choice to do something different, and letting go of the need to judge.

So that's three things, right there:

1. Raise awareness to a level that allows you to watch yourself doing whatever it is you do in life.
2. Accept that for right now, you are doing the best that you can, with what you've got.
3. Create the option of doing something different according to the awareness that you have.

Over time you will find yourself deleting old programs and old data files that you used to run, your processor will run more smoothly and efficiently.

My point then, is rather simple: By becoming mindful, we can actually get past being mind full.

At the risk of being childish, there is almost an innocence in the practice of being mindful, purely because we simply observe and witness.

Let me give you one last example to drive my point home:

Let's say I take a test in school. I enter the test aware of what I know and curious, but ready to bring my studying to the marketplace of performance. I am simply interested in being fully present, and allowing the information that I have prepared to flow into the answers I choose. As I go through the test some questions come up for which I am not so well-prepared, and I begin to second guess myself. I begin to have a discourse with myself about not being good enough, or not having

studied hard enough. In short, I am no longer practicing mindfulness, I am in fact practicing mind-full-ness. Now here's a curious thing, if I can be aware that I am in fact derailing my own mind at this juncture, I am actually being a witness to it, and am therefore practicing mindfulness. If I get on the new train and go for the ride, I am not practicing mindfulness. If I choose to focus my mind on the moment, I am back in the practice of being mindful.

It will come as no surprise then, that so long as I stay present, I am capable of doing much better on a test than if I beat myself up during the test. Additionally, I learn to see opportunities in my learning process that will allow more of my potential to surface over time. I can witness myself as being a work in progress, doing the best that I can with what I've got in the moment.

By working on being mindful, my sense of self improves, I recover from setbacks sooner, and I am capable of performing at a higher level.

Recall then three steps:

1. Be a witness to what you are doing in each moment.
2. Remove obsolete programming.
3. Allow yourself the freedom to create new choices according to your insights.

And so, over time the clutter of a lifetime of file errors, damaged drive sectors, corrupt programs, redundant programs and outdated code segments can all be removed bit-by-bit, to reveal our full potential.

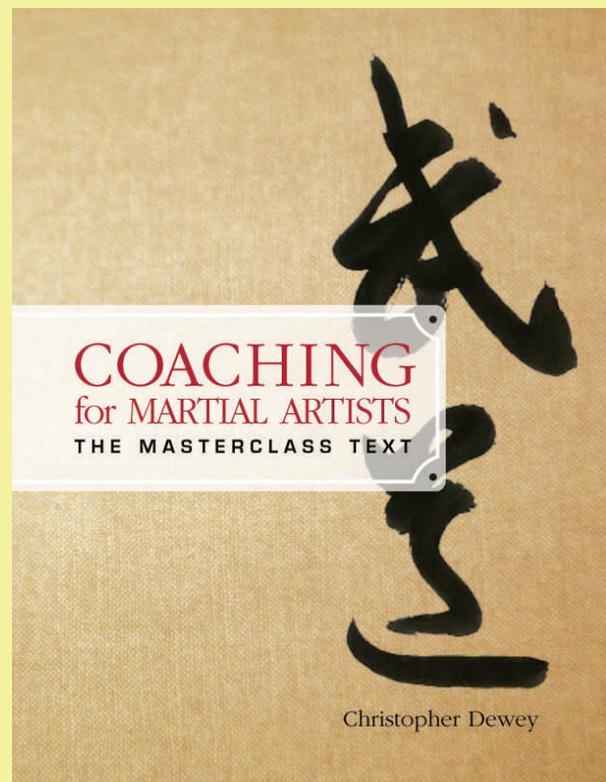
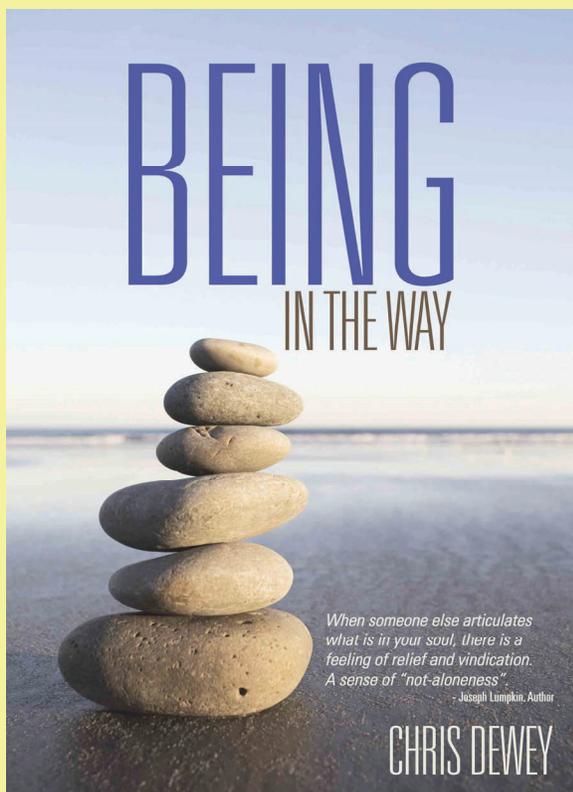
Truly, we *are* greater and wiser than we think we are.

And that's scary for a lot of us, so it is easier to hide in the clutter. So, if it is scary to you...what old message are you hearing? What do you want to do about that?

Who are we without the clutter? Who do you want to be? ☺

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books and/or seminars contact Chris at:**

662 769 5522 or send me an e-mail to chris@thirdpathway.com