



Last lesson, we looked at the differences between being 'mind full' and mindfulness. Hopefully, you can recall times during the past 2 weeks when you were experiencing one or the other. If you did notice yourself at the time of falling into monkey mind/default mode/engaging with negative thoughts...congratulations....you are already making fantastic progress. If not, please don't worry, this **awareness** will eventually occur in the future. You will, with practice, begin to start to notice how sometimes you drift off into default mode during the day.

Living mindfully is particularly important in our lives if it involves important tasks. For example, let us hope we never catch ourselves in default mode if we are driving at the time. In default mode, not only are we not fully engaged with what we are doing, but we are much more likely to engage in negative thoughts and experience negative stress.



When we are involved in our activities, stress can sometimes have its benefits. If we find ourselves in a jungle, we may immediately have to practice fight or flight with lions, tigers, etc. No doubt, stress can have its purpose with respect to how best to survive. Likewise, there are times we can use a certain amount of stress to assist us to function at our peak performance...it may be for the purpose of preparing our body to perform at its peak performance playing football or running a race.

The trick with any stress present ...is to have the balance right. Problems occur when we experience excessive stress levels when undertaking any task. Likewise, if we constantly relive negative past events, or are forever worrying about the future with what might happen, could happen, etc. As a result, we expend our energy with matters that are simply only in our mind. We start to believe the distortion of reality which our mind has created ...we then blow things out of proportion and do not give much attention to the present moment.



The skill we need to learn is be conscious of the early warning signs of how our mind falls into becoming stressful or in default mode. If we catch ourselves early enough, we can take immediately positive steps to bring ourselves **gently** back to the present. For example, we can take immediate action to avoid such stress by bringing our mind **gently** back by focusing on our breath and giving immediate attention to relaxing any part of our body experiencing tension.



How successful we are really depends on the gentleness of our self-talk. If we can be non-judgmental and bring a sense of curiosity (rather than self-condemnation) to how we sometimes negatively experience our daily activities, we can then learn a great deal more about ourselves and understand the importance of developing self-compassion to return to our natural peaceful state. It really is in our interests for our overall mental health to be our very best friend. We can be (with practicing self-compassion) the very best friend we are ever going to have!