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## Don't Let Clutter of Extraneous Thoughts Get in Your Way

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## Don't Let Clutter of Extraneous Thoughts Get in Your Way

**By Traci Evison**  
UCF Forum columnist  
Wednesday, April 13, 2016

I have the best conversations when I am alone.

This can be while I'm driving, brushing my teeth or cooking dinner.

I can offer opinions on what I think co-workers should do to advance their careers and I give insightful advice on disciplining children. I'm eloquent in my rationale for who should be appointed the next Supreme Court justice. I'm as well-spoken as Atticus Finch in "To Kill a Mockingbird."

These periods of persuasive expression are the result of my practiced "mindfulness," or just the state of trying to minimize all the clutter of extraneous thoughts.

Too many people develop the habit of focusing on details that are not important, such as comparing their new car purchase with the neighbor's, or dwelling on whether they ruined their diet by indulging in pizza and chocolate pie last night for dinner. This can increase their stress level if they don't make an effort to redirect their thoughts.

For the past five years or so I've found the practice of mindfulness to be my solution.

Mindfulness is paying attention to the present – in other words, "living in the moment" and not judging your thoughts and feelings as good or bad. This is important if even for just for a few moments a day to release the unnecessary details our minds hold onto as a result of our sometimes overscheduled and overstimulated world. When we release these distractors, our stress level decreases and our productivity and overall well-being increase.

How does one achieve this?

People find success in different ways. Some find success through yoga, meditation, creative acts, or persuasive expression. You may be thinking: “I’m not flexible. I don’t have the patience to sit and do nothing. I got a C in art class.”

You don’t have to be good at these things in order to reap the benefits. Just like you don’t have to be good at bowling to have fun watching a potential gutter ball surprise you and knock down a few bowling pins on a Saturday afternoon with friends.

As author Kurt Vonnegut said: “Practicing an art, no matter how well or badly, is a way to make your soul grow, for heaven’s sake. Sing in the shower. Dance to the radio. Tell stories. Write a poem to a friend, even a lousy poem. Do it as well as you possibly can. You will get an enormous reward. You will have created something.”

Creativity, in whatever form you choose, is meant to open the door for you to have fun and redirect your mind down a different path towards mindfulness.

I have been surprised at the number of mindful moments experienced when I’m participating in creative acts ranging from carving a pumpkin, to experimenting with new ingredients while cooking dinner, or completing a picture in an adult coloring book.

I didn’t get an A in grade school art class, either, but that has not stopped me from finding ways to usher in a few moments of mindfulness for a more balanced day.

Don’t let it stop you, either.

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