AWAKE AND AWARE: UTILIZING SPLIT-ATTENTION TO LINK MINDFUL AWARENESS WITH EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES

by

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read AWAKE AND AWARE: UTILIZING SPLIT-ATTENTION TO LINK MINDFUL AWARENESS WITH EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES by W. Roy Whitten, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Transformative Learning and Change at the California Institute of Integral Studies.

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GENERATING MINDFULNESS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Abstract

Fourteen years ago, Tart (1990) suggested that people could use some of Gurdjieff's practices to extend the experience of mindful awareness–most often learned at a Buddhist-oriented retreat–into the complexity and turmoil of their daily lives. He defined mindful awareness, introduced the Gurdjieff practices of self-observation and self-remembering, offered a set of guidelines developed from his work with mindfulness studies in general and Gurdjieff's work in particular, and he invited teachers and practitioners of mindfulness to experiment with these guidelines and publish their results. To date, no one has formally responded to his invitation.

This research project was inspired by Tart's invitation, and it reflected the researcher's lifelong interest in the possibility of generating mindful awareness in the midst of daily activities. This study addressed systemic limitations that appeared to exist in the current pedagogy of mindfulness training which was fundamentally reliant on a meditation-based methodology that required regular and, at times, lengthy *withdrawal* from everyday life .

Four co-researchers cooperatively participated in a 90-day inquiry into the question: *what happens when people link mindful awareness with everyday*

activities? They employed the Gurdjieffian practice of split-attention (Ouspensky, 1977; Tart, 1994) as the linking activity, spent 95% of the inquiry in their own work/life environment, and, during this three-month period, invested 70 hours in mutual reflection on their experiences.

The study utilized case study methodology to evaluate and describe the experience of participants. The results included a marked increase in the experience of mindful awareness in the midst of everyday life. The events and circumstances of life at work and at home, which previously had appeared to be barriers to mindful awareness, often functioned as the occasions for *waking up* into mindful awareness. Participants found themselves waking up far more often in the midst of their daily activities, they became somewhat more proficient at extending these moments of mindfulness when they occurred, and they determined that the practice of split-attention was practical, easy to use, and highly effective.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Researcher's Context

For three decades now, my professional life has been intertwined with a passion for the experience of mindful awareness. In September, 1973, at the beginning of my final year in graduate school, I experienced what Grof (2001) called a *spontaneous transpersonal experience*. At the time, I didn't have this label to describe my experience; for years I described it as a feeling of simultaneously *imploding* and *exploding*. It was a more dramatic version of incidents from childhood, when I would sit at top of a tall tree near a rock quarry in the little Southern California town where I was raised. Now, I recognize these experiences as forms of *mindful awareness:* a sense of presence, awake and alive to the moment, and *aware* of myself *as* awake in the moment.

As my professional interests took me from parish priesthood into pastoral therapy, spiritual direction, human development training, business consulting, executive coaching, and professional mediation, the experience of mindfulness–its challenges and possibilities–was the ground to which I kept returning. Chasing it pulled me along my professional path; learning about it and teaching it to others galvanized and directed my attention. Of course, there were periods of time when I neglected the experience entirely and became interested in other things, but my passion for mindful awareness always returned to occupy a central place in my understanding of who I am and what my life is about.

Like many others, I have experimented with multiple methods of opening myself to the experience of being *awake, aware of being aware,* and *in the present moment.* I've spent nearly 40 years experimenting with prayer, meditation, psychological and spiritual development, psychic exploration, and retreats of various sizes and shapes. I regret none of it, and I'm especially grateful to the many teachers along the way. Through it all, I noticed a fundamental, cyclical pattern: I would (a) experience often profound stretches of mindful awareness while in meditation or on retreat; which I would (b) lose when I returned to my everyday activities; in response to which I would (c) invest more time in meditative activities, psychological reflection, and retreats; until finally I would (d) give up, concluding that mindful awareness just couldn't be sustained in any meaningful way in daily life; and, when the longing for mindful awareness would grow strong enough, I would (e) start the cycle all over again.

This pattern shifted in the fall of 2001, when, immersed in doctoral studies, amidst the freedom afforded by a year-long sabbatical, the rediscovery of Tart's article (1990) inspired an idea: use the practice of split-attention (which had been my on-again, off-again practice for two decades) to *link* the experience of mindful awareness–which the practice often brought–to the activities of my daily life. It occurred to me that, if I could use split-attention to link the experience of mindful awareness *to* specific activities that formed the backbone of daily life, then, perhaps, when I undertook those activities, I would *wake up* into mindful awareness instead of *staying asleep* in the thrall of my automatic thought process. I wondered if this might expanded my capacity to be mindful in the *midst* of my

day-to-day life instead of in *spite* of it. I spent 18 months experimenting with this notion, and I noticed enough changes in my level of mindful awareness each day, that I decided to undertake this study and see (a) if this linking practice would work for others and (b) if my own experience would be enhanced by the collaborative nature of a participative inquiry.

The Question

The core question of this study–also known as the *research problem* (Merriam, 2001) or the *grand tour question* (Creswell, 2003)–was: what happens when people link mindful awareness to everyday activities?

In addition to this core question, there were specific issue questions–also known as *sub-questions* (Creswell, 2003), *particularizing questions* (Maxwell, 1996), or *research questions* (Merriam, 2001)–that determined the data I sought, the data analysis I pursued, and the format of my research report. I was also aware of the following *topical issues* (Stake, 1995) that represented information I wanted to obtain:

- What was the participants' previous experience of mindful awareness?
- What was their estimate of how often they experienced spontaneously *waking up* each day (Tart's first form of mindful experience), and how long did these periods of mindfulness last?
- How did other people, considered authoritative in the field, describe their mindful experience and its benefits?

I was also aware of the following list of *research issues* which I was willing to amend through progressive focusing (Stake, 1995) as required during the study.

- What changes were there in the consistency and quality of mindful moments in the participants' everyday lives?
- What differences were there in the everyday experience of the six specific everyday activities that participants were linking to mindfulness?
- How effective were each of the six activities in *calling* people to mindfulness in the midst of everyday life?
- What was the impact of this program on the overall quality of participants' lives?

The Purpose

I was personally familiar with the frustration of being unable to sustain in daily life the mindfulness I experienced in meditation and on retreat. I wanted to make a contribution to the existing pedagogy of mindful awareness training by augmenting existing pedagogy with a practice that was simple, adaptable, and effective. I expected to be surprised by new perspectives and understandings regarding the general experience of mindful awareness and the specific practice of learning how to generate it in the midst of day-to-day living.

The Significance of the Research

There are several groups of people who can benefit from this research. There are: (a) the teachers of mindfulness, who can augment their pedagogical methodologies with the practice of split-attention and possibly increase the effectiveness of their instruction; (b) the students of mindfulness, who can with relative ease add this practice to their existing disciplines and approaches to generating mindful awareness in their everyday lives; and (c) the family, friends, and colleagues of these people, who are on the receiving end of what these teachers and students think, feel, and do as a result of being more mindfully aware at home and at work.

I believe that the practice of using split-attention to link mindful awareness with activities fundamental to people's daily lives is a simple and effective addition to the ways that mindful awareness is taught and practiced. I do not want to overstate or understate the benefits of being more mindfully aware during the day-to-day activities of life. There is ample evidence in this study and in the literature of this field that decisions made at home and work–when undertaken from a mindful perspective–often contain less judgment and more objectivity, less driven-ness and more ease, less reactivity and more wisdom. Mindful awareness brings a freedom from habitual patterns of thinking and behavior, a freedom that leads to greater open-mindedness, compassion, discernment, and capacity for fresh and unpredictable responses to the challenges of life. Frankly, our world–from the most local to the most global of levels–is

desperately in need of the clear-eyed, objective creativity that mindful awareness can bring.

Researcher Assumptions

As I undertook this study, I was aware of numerous assumptions about mindful awareness in general, the culture in which I lived, and the experiences of mindful awareness that were part of my personal history.

Assumptions about Mindful Awareness

I assumed that *mindfulness was not easily understood in our American culture*. This assumption was drawn from three decades of teaching personal development to thousands of people. I restricted this comment to my own, American, culture, but I believed it also applied to the prevailing cultures of other countries in which I'd worked: the United Kingdom, South Africa, New Zealand, and the people I'd worked with in Latin America who were both educated and professional.

I assumed that *the lack of familiarity with mindfulness was a significant deficiency* in our practical and spiritual education, and that it reflected the condition of humanity as a whole. Although many of the people with whom I'd worked were able to experience mindful awareness and were enormously attracted to the experience, they tended to get lost (as most of us do) in their mind's perceptions and thoughts about their day-to-day circumstances. I believed that this was a human tendency that was exacerbated by what we call *civilized* culture. From my own experience of the benefits found in the experience of

mindful awareness, I concluded that our culture is much the worse for its ignorance of this possibility for human beings.

I assumed that *the experience of mindfulness was fundamentally important to human existence*. In my life, the experience of mindful awareness, even for short periods of time, had generated a profound effect on matters fundamental to my emotional, psychological, and spiritual development: self-identity, self-esteem, personal authority, creativity, peace of mind, trust, courage, and truthfulness. I held this experience in high regard–higher, in fact, than any other experience, insight, feeling, or state of being. I was purposeful, therefore, about bracketing this opinion during the study, so that I was freer to discern the relative importance of mindful awareness for my co-researchers and to appreciate the level of regard in which they held mindful awareness.

I assumed that *Tart's definition of mindfulness was authoritative and accurate.* I based this on his standing in the fields of conscious studies and transpersonal psychology.

I assumed that *I was capable of comparing my experience to Tart's description and concluding that they matched.* When I read Tart's four-fold description of mindful awareness (1990), I identified those experiences as my own. Since I was approaching this study from a participatory paradigm (Patton, 2002), my assumption was not so much that I completely understood the meaning Tart had behind his words; rather, I assumed that I could trust myself to identify his description as applying to experiences that I had undergone in my life. This was an important assumption to keep in mind, because it indicated that (a) I alone

was responsible for deciding if and when I was experiencing mindful awareness, and (b) my co-researchers were similarly responsible for making that determination for themselves.

I assumed that *the experience of mindfulness is usually brief.* In my experience, mindful awareness usually lasted for a few moments, a minute or two at most. I assumed this was true for others.

Assumptions about my own Experience of Mindfulness

I assumed that *my experience of mindfulness and mind*less*ness was similar to that of others.* I assumed that my long-standing interest in mindful awareness *might* provide a greater understanding and more experience of mindfulness than others might have; however, I also assumed that the *experience itself* of mindfulness and mind*less*ness was common to all people.

I assumed that *what worked for me would work for others*. This had been a fundamental premise of my educational work for 35 years, and it was a fundamental premise of this inquiry; linking mindful awareness to everyday activities had provided significant benefits for me, and I believed that it would have similar benefits for others.

Contrarily, I also assumed that *what works for me* won't *work for others.* In my life, I had often been the *odd man out,* especially when it came to matters of spiritual and psychological development. This was why my learnings about mindfulness had been mostly a private affair. I was aware that undertaking this study required a certain courage and vulnerability on my part. I was also aware that it was important to keep this assumption in mind during the inquiry, so that I

didn't take offense when people disagreed with me or dismissed matters that I considered important. I did not want any defensiveness on my part to interfere with my capacity to clearly perceive and fully appreciate our experiences during the study.

Assumptions about Mindfulness Pedagogy

I assumed that I was correct in concluding that that the experience of mindfulness and the practice of meditation (especially *vipassana* meditation) are often regarded as the same thing. I assumed that this was reflective of the human tendency to confuse method with results, and that it led people to focus on the practice of meditation instead of the experience of mindful awareness.

I assumed that *people in a mindful state could sometimes tell whether or not others were experiencing mindfulness at that moment.* There were two reasons that I thought it was important to keep this assumption clearly in mind: (a) our group of co-researchers could be of valuable support to each other by sharing their perceptions of this matter, and (b) it was vital that we bracket our opinions so that the independent judgment of each person was upheld when it came to that person's responsibility for identifying mindful awareness when it appeared.

I assumed that *exploring what happened for people when they were mindful required experiential inquiry*. I assumed that mindfulness was a state of being–something experienced *in real time*. I assumed that, although people could have *concepts* about mindful awareness, *ideas* about techniques of generating mindful awareness, and *explanations* about the experience of mindful awareness, mindfulness itself was not a concept, an idea, or an explanation: it was an

experience of a certain kind and quality of awareness. Therefore, for co-researchers to explore what happened when they were being mindful in daily life, I assumed that they would need to *experience* mindful awareness *in their everyday lives*. This was a *very* strong assumption on my part, and I was determined to keep my eye on it, because it could blind me to concepts, ideas, and explanations that could be very helpful to people wishing to generate mindfulness in their everyday lives. I was aware that this dissertation, for example, would consist *exclusively* of ideas, concepts, and explanations, and, hopefully, it would add value to the process of people discovering the experience of mindful awareness in their everyday lives.

I assumed that *the time-honored methodology of meditation and retreat, including the dynamics of group collaboration and mutual support, was helpful to learning how to be mindfully aware.* This assumption was based on my own experiences as student and teacher and the value I placed on both the practice of meditation and the experience of retreat. Furthermore, I was aware that the face-to-face meetings the four of us would have as part of this inquiry would have a retreat quality to them, i.e., a departure from normal living. I wanted to respect the existing ways in which each of us was learning mindful awareness, and, through the practice of split-attention, add value especially to the 95% of our inquiry that would take place in the setting of our own day-to-day lives.

Most importantly, I assumed that *it was possible for the everyday events of life to serve as reminding functions for mindful awareness.* This had been true in my own experience and, while I did not know if it was possible for others, I

intended to hold open that possibility so that it might be fully and objectively explored.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This review begins with the shift in Western understanding about human awareness that has occurred during the past 45 years. It examines the explosion of interest in and teaching about the human capacity to be *awake and aware in the present moment*, a capacity has become known primarily as *mindfulness* and has been identified with the practice of meditation. The review tracks how mindfulness has been defined and described, enumerates some of its many benefits, and examines the pedagogies by which it is taught: especially the Buddhist pedagogy which is, by far, the predominant force in the teaching of mindful awareness in our culture.

The review then examines the systemic limitations arising from (a) the popularization of mindfulness and (b) the grounding of its pedagogy in Buddhist practice. It suggests that existing pedagogies can be *strengthened and enhanced* by reorienting our relationship to the ordinary events of everyday life through the utilization of *split-attention*, and it suggests that such a reorientation can support the process by which human beings are attracted by reality itself to a higher level of awareness in which they can make decisions that benefit humanity.

Over 300 publications were reviewed, many of which were in fundamental agreement about elements of the experience of mindful awareness and its pedagogy. The references cited below were chosen according to the following principles: (a) works that illustrated a given point particularly well; (b) works that

were considered classic or fundamental to the understandings of other works; (c) if several works that could be cited had *already* been cited, another work that the reader might find especially helpful was chosen.

A Shift of Understanding about Human Awareness

It was more than half a century after James published his seminal work (1902/1997) that Eastern thought found a welcome reception in the West. As the United States entered the 1960s, post-war prosperity and scientific advances had brought unprecedented affluence and technological control. We found ourselves becoming the most powerful nation on earth, we had a vital and intelligent president, and, with our eyes on a trip to the moon, virtually the sky was the limit. At the same time, our children regularly practiced diving under their desks for protection from nuclear attack, and novelists and playwrights– often the signalers of change–had raised questions about the illusions of rationality, capitalism, and unquestioned authority (Huxley, 1945; Orwell, 1954, 1949; Sinclair, 1946;). The possibility of and the need for change was in the air, and, 50 years after the seminal insights of William James, educators were turning to the subject of human awareness, its perception of reality, and what the world's religions might have to offer on this subject (Huxley, 1945, 1994; Smith, 1992; Watts, 1960, 1972).

Around 1960, exploration into the possibilities of human awareness began to expand exponentially. Accounts of these explorations–one of the most readable of which is Schwartz (1995)–document a wide range of activity and experiments with changes in human awareness: a shift from the level of

awareness with which most people lived everyday to an experience of *being aware of being aware*–an experience that, primarily, became known as *mindful awareness*. Early experiments with hallucinogens–conducted by Leary, McClelland, Alpert, and Grof–demonstrated that human beings could expand their awareness beyond whatever was the object of their attention. They could, in fact, become aware *of being aware*. Very quickly, and partly in response to the limitations and dangers of drug-induced experience, researchers and educators turned to Eastern practices and spiritual disciplines, which had been dedicated for many centuries to the practice of *present-moment awareness*. This meeting of East and West ignited an explosion of activity and exploration into how people could *be here now* and what happened to them as a result.

- Theologians, philosophers, and teachers published accessible and influential books in English that explicated Hindu, Buddhist, Sufi, and Taoist thought and practice (Ghose, 1973; Gunaratana, 1991; Hanh, 1975, 1987; Harding, 2002; Helminski, 1992; Krishnamurti 1969; Mahesh Yogi, 1968; Norbu, 1987; Pearce, 1975; Ram Dass, 1971; Sogyal, 1994; Sole-Leris, 1986; D. Suzuki, 1986, 1991; S. Suzuki, 2001; Watts, 1972, 1973).
- Experimentation with altered states of consciousness–drug-induced and generated through a variety of meditative techniques, music, and dance–became wide-spread in the 1960s. Institutions were established as centers of formal and informal learning and exploration: Murphy and Price founded Esalen in 1962, Trungpa started Naropa Institute in

1974, Chaudhuri traveled from India to become the founding president of the California Institute of Asian Studies in 1968.

- Retreat centers, mostly Buddhist in orientation, multiplied across America, gathering around figures such as Hanh (2000) and Katagiri (1988, 2000). Two of the most influential people in this movement were Kornfield and Goldstein, two Americans who, respectively, had spent time in Thailand and India, and whose aim was to bring Buddhism to America without the robes and the gurus (Schwartz, 1995). Together, they founded the Insight Meditation Society in Massachusetts in 1976. Kornfield started a separate center, Spirit Rock, in California in 1990. Their publications (Goldstein, 1987; Goldstein & Kornfield, 2001; Kornfield, 1993) and those of the people who learned Buddhist mindfulness practice at their centers (Epstein, 2001; Goleman, 1988; Nisker, 1998; Rosenberg, 1999; Salzberg, 1997, 2001), have dramatically influenced American understanding of mindfulness.
- Psychologists, educators, and practitioners outside of religious and formal spiritual traditions offered popular, practical methodologies for generating the self-observation and present-moment awareness that was central to the Eastern approaches to living (Bennett-Goleman, 2001; Burton, 1995; Deikman, 1982; de Mello, 1990; de Ropp, 1968; Palmer, 1995; Tart, 1986, 1994; Tolle, 1999). Much of this work is grounded in the teaching of Gurdjieff (Burton, 1995; Gurdjieff, 1969,

1975; Needleman & Baker, 2000; Nicoll, 1996; Ouspensky, 1971, 1977; Walker, 1969), although the schools devoted to Gurdjieffian systems prefer to stay out of the public spotlight.

- Maslow, Suttich, and Grof coined the term *transpersonal* to describe a new focus for psychological study that concentrated on human experience that transcended individual awareness, and the experience of mindful awareness was investigated as a transpersonal phenomenon (Murphy, 1992; Tart, 1975; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993a; White, 1974).
- The *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* was created in 1960 and the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* in 1969. These periodicals served to document an ongoing cultural conversation about the experience of mindful awareness (Walsh, 1977, 1978).

- Scientifically-trained researchers and psychologists developed the new field of *consciousness studies* and explored levels of awareness beyond ordinary, waking consciousness. Tart coined the term, *altered states of consciousness* (1969), and such states were studied through varied means such as brain-wave study (Green, 1977; Hirai, 1978, 1989) and holotropic breathing (Grof, 1990).

After four decades of exploration and thought, *mindful awareness* was now understood as an *altered state of consciousness*, something remarkably different from the levels of awareness with which people normally lived. A *state of consciousness* was seen as a pattern or system, an arrangement of the parts or aspects of the mind such as memory, evaluation processes, and sense of identity

(Tart, 1986). Although the state–this pattern or system–was fluid and highly individualistic from person to person, it was remarkably stable in the face of everyday surprises. A state was considered to be an *altered* state if "the experiencer feels his consciousness is radically different from the way it functions ordinarily" (Tart, 2000, p. 208).

There were interesting discussions about the number of states available for human experience and their functions (Tart, 2000; see also de Ropp, 1968; Goleman, 1988; Tart, 1986; Wilber, 2000a), and there were important distinctions regarding *higher* states and the *paradigms* from which understandings of states emerged (Tart, 2000). For the purpose of this review–which is to understand the experience of mindful awareness–it was sufficient to use de Ropp's five-state model which fundamentally aligned with Gurdjieff's model (Tart, 1986). Although this model was less discerning about higher states than the models discussed by Goleman, Tart (2000), and Wilber, it had the value of simplicity and agreed with *all* the models about the first three baseline states with which people are most familiar.

Deep sleep without dreams	The First Level
Sleep with Dreams	The Second Level
Waking sleep (identification)	The Third Level
Self-transcendence (self-remembering)	The Fourth Level
Objective Consciousness (cosmic consciousness)	The Fifth Level

(de Ropp, 1968, p. 51)

This model contained a surprise for first-time observers, for de Ropp referred to their normal, waking consciousness as *waking sleep*. He contended that the state of consciousness in which people lived so fully and so successfully was, in fact, an automated, habitual, un-free state in which they were prisoners of their own thinking process. This contention was fully consistent with the thinking of *every* authority in the field. What passed for normal, human awareness was described in various ways, among them: *sleep* (Gurdjieff, 1969, 1975; Ouspensky, 1977; de Mello, 1990), *enslaved attention* (de Ropp, 1968), *consensus trance* (Tart, 1986), and *the trance of ordinary life* (Deikman, 1982). The Third Level of consciousness was regarded as a state of continual *illusion* and *self-deception,* which was referred to as *samara* in Buddhism (Tart, 2000) and *maya* in Hinduism (Smith, 1992). In this state, what felt like self-control and autonomous choice were "largely a mechanical reaction based on . . . conditioning" (Tart, 1986, p. ix), and people's impulses, fears, and imaginings were literally running away with them.

> There is a Zen story about a man riding a horse which is galloping very quickly. Another man, standing alongside the road, yells at him, "Where are you going?" and the man on the horse yells back, "I don't know. Ask the horse." (Hanh, 1987. p. 65)

Mindful awareness–awareness not only of the sights and sounds of normal living, but also *of the one observing these sights and sounds* –was the Fourth Level of consciousness, and, as it expanded and deepened, experiences of objective consciousness (Ouspensky, 1977) or cosmic consciousness (Bucke, 1901/1969; James, 1902/1997) became available. For this review, distinction among the higher states in the Fifth Level (Tart, 2000) was unnecessary. It was

sufficient to draw a sharp distinction *between Levels 1-3 and Levels 4-5*, for it was here that a state of mindful awareness made its appearance. Although not all altered states were equally valuable or helpful–e.g. being emotionally incapacitated is an altered state (Tart, 1986)–the experience of mindful awareness was definitely experienced as a significant shift from the normal, baseline experience of ordinary awareness, which, in contrast, could be described as mind*less*ness (Tart, 1994).

The Experience of Mindful Awareness

Tart (1990) provided a description of mindful awareness that referred to either of the following experiences, or any combination of them:

- A clear, *lucid* quality of awareness of the everyday experiences of life.
- A clear quality of awareness as applied to deeper and more subtle processes of the mind.
- An a*wareness of being aware, in which* some part of the mind "witnesses" or remains aware of the ongoing experience of life.
- A continuous and precise awareness of the process of being aware.

The fundamental nature of the human was described as *original wakefulness* (Chokyi Nyima, 2002), and the experience of mindful awareness was variously described as: *taking hold of our minds* (Nhat Hanh, 1975); *being here-and-now* (Epstein, 2001; Ram Dass, 1971); an experience of *continuous*

consciousness (Ghose, 1993), *witness consciousness* (Wilber, 2000b), and *the vast, empty self behind our many false personalities* (Arjuna, 1998); a *remembrance of self* (Gurdjieff, 1975); the activation of the *observing self* (Deikman, 1982) and the *watcher at the gate* (de Ropp, 1968; *headlessness* (Harding, 2002); and *moment-to-moment awareness* (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

People described the *experience* of mindful awareness in ways that reflected their awareness of their thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, awareness, and their capacity. Some of these descriptions included these phrases: a *profound lucidity and vividness* (Norbu, 1996); *a hard-to-describe quality of existing in a new, real way* (Tart, 1986); *solid like stone or a lightness like floating* (Kornfield, 1993); *allowing the warring and fragmented aspects of ourselves to become friends* (Sogyal, 1994); *a sense of freedom and release and pure emptiness* (Wilber, 2000b); *resting in awareness, no coming, no going* (Ram Dass, 1971); *an almost unbearable love for the world* (Watts, 1973); *like the healing silence that follows a long political speech* (de Ropp, 1968); *a silence that makes everything new* (Krishnamurti, 1988); *spontaneous awe at the sacredness of life and a gratitude for life* (Merton, 1949); *waves of gratitude arising in the mind* (Spretnak, 1993).

Many authors agreed about a fundamental *rightness* to humanity that was revealed through experiences of mindful awareness. The essence of human beings was described repeatedly as an *original, primordial goodness* (Easwaran, 1985; Trungpa, 1984).

Many people witnessed to the beneficial effects of mindful awareness, including the following comments:

- Emotional benefits–*noticing painful emotions instead of remaining unaware of them* (Walsh, 1999); *calm and peacefulness* (Miller, 2000); *capable of great love* (Salzberg, 1997); *release from compulsion* (Das, 1997); *laughter and joyfulness* (Hafiz, 1996).

- Physical benefits–*more brightness and vibrancy in sight* (Tolle, 1999); *like being carried along* (Harding, 2001); *increased strength, energy, and will* (Helminski, 1992; Walsh, 1978); *a sense of freshness* (Rosenberg, 1999); *an energy of health and well-being* (Deikman, 1982; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Spretnak, 1991); and a capacity for *wonderful sensations* (Ouspensky, 1977).

- Mental benefits–*knowledge* (Miller, 2000); *understanding and forgiveness, first to self, then to others* (Salzberg, 1997); *freedom from habitual thinking and activity* (Helminski, 1992).

- Benefits for Awareness–*a slowing down, greater perception* (Levine, 1989); *appreciation and perceptiveness* (Kabat-Zinn, 1990); *the seeing of new possibilities* (S. Suzuki, 2001); *radical openness* (Miller, 1994).

- Benefits for Capacity - *freedom to choose and to act boldly* (Wilber, 2000b); *to bear suffering* (Helminski, 1992); *letting go of control* (Miller 1994); *letting go of striving* (Goldstein, 1987); *being yourself without getting tough about it* (Merton, 1949).

The experience of mindful awareness, although new to America, had touched a human *longing* (de Ropp, 1968) and a *taste* (Wilber, 2000b) for wholeness, freedom, and well-being. In moments of mindful awareness, the process by which people's minds interpreted events was momentarily stilled. This provided an extraordinary opportunity to see more objectively, to act more spontaneously, and to love more wholeheartedly (Kornfield, 1993). Mindfulness appeared to loosen the mind's automatic grip on awareness that kept people prisoners (Needleman, 1991) to their own processes of thought and feeling. It appeared to allow people to expand their frames of reference (Mezirow, 2000) and to source learning that was transformative instead of merely translative (Wilber, 2000b), and, even though it only lasted for brief periods of time (Tart, 1986, 1994), the benefits were clear to those who had experienced it.

A central concern was *how to teach mindful awareness* so that people could more often break loose from the confines of Level 3 awareness and access the possibilities of being awake and aware in their everyday lives.

The Pedagogy of Mindful Awareness

Buddhism as the Dominant Pedagogical Influence

In November, 2002, an Internet search for publications and retreat centers concerned with mindful awareness training resulted in the Google search engine reporting 11,400 hits, of which it selected 1,200 for inspection (it eliminated the others due to repetition of URL addresses). These sites revealed over 140 retreat

centers, mostly in the United States, all but four of which were Buddhist in orientation. In March, 2003, Google reported 50,200 hits on a similar search, of which an estimated 90% included references to Buddhism, *vipassana*, *dharma*, or Zen. This result paralleled the literature available for review and revealed a *significant predominance* of Buddhist orientation in the pedagogy of mindfulness.

In America, Buddhism was the pedagogy of choice when it comes to mindful awareness training. There were other systems designed to educate people about Level 4 consciousness and beyond–for example: Sufism (Helminski, 1992); various forms of Hinduism (Ghose, 1993; Krishnamurti, 1997; Nisargadatta, 1999; Nityananda, 1984; Maharshi); Taoism (Ni, 1989); forms of Buddhism other than Theravadan, such as Dzogchen (Norbu, 1987, 1996); and approaches that integrate or are independent of definite spiritual and religious traditions (Burton, 1995; Deikman, 1982; Leonard & Murphy, 1995; Parsons, 1995; Tolle, 1999, Wilber, 2001b)–but Theravadan Buddhism was the foundation for the great majority of pedagogies available in America. One sign of this dominance was that Level 4 consciousness became known primarily as *mindfulness:* a direct reflection of the practice of *insight meditation* fundamental to the Buddhist pedagogy, a practice also known as *mindfulness* meditation.

It is important to remember this dominance when examining the effectiveness of current pedagogical approaches, because, as will be seen, the monastic origins of Buddhism and its fundamental reliance on meditation, often taught in a retreat setting, generated systemic issues that must be addressed for its contribution to our culture to be sustained and strengthened.

Central Pedagogical Elements

Introduction

The pedagogical systems–Buddhist and non-Buddhist–that offer training in mindful awareness were both subtle and complex, and an extensive explication of their approaches was unnecessary for this review. It was not germane to this study to discuss otherwise interesting pedagogical elements such as: the experience of teaching stories, the role of community support, ethics as a context for learning, or curiosity and inquiry as a basis for learning–all of which are central to many of the pedagogical traditions mentioned here. Three elements of mindful awareness training in general, and Buddhist mindfulness training in particular, *were* important to this study: (a) the avowed purpose of transforming the daily life experience of participants, (b) the experiential orientation, and (c) the fundamental reliance on regular *withdrawal* from the stimulation of everyday life.

A Purpose to Transform Everyday Life

While there were practitioners whose primary aim was to experience mindful awareness and escape the suffering involved in day-to-day living, the great majority of Western practitioners and educators were concerned with emulating people like Gandhi–whose engagement with the circumstances of his life had transformed the political landscape of India and Great Britain–and Nhat Hanh–the Vietnamese Zen master who was nominated by Martin Luther King, Jr. for the Nobel Peace Prize. The purpose of mindful awareness training was expressed in various ways: *a concentration on the usual everyday routine* (S.

Suzuki, 2001), *living moments fully and completely* (Kabat-Zinn, 1994), *engaging one's life with heart and loving-kindness* (Kornfield, 1993), *bringing peace to the corner of the world where one lives* (Nhat Hanh, 1991), and *living each moment wholeheartedly* (Katagiri, 1988).

An Experiential Orientation

Given the nature of the pedagogical problem–that whenever people were living their daily lives with Level 3 awareness, they *didn't know* that they were asleep (Tart, 1986) and they *didn't need* Level 4 awareness to get through their day (Tart, 1994)–the only education that worked was experiential. Mindfulness training *necessarily required* people to *experience* a shift of awareness from Level 3 to Level 4, for they could only learn that they had been asleep by first waking up! This problem was intensified by a process of *consensus consciousness* (Tart, 1994): a pervasive pressure at all levels of culture to maintain a state of Level 3 awareness, which was considered the *normal* state of being.

Practitioners and educators of mindful awareness were well aware of the critical distinctions that Tart (2001) drew when developing his pedagogical approach to what he called *mind science:*

> Scientism ≠ Science
> Religion ≠ Spirituality
> Belief ≠ Direct Experience

Teachers realized that, in the absence of direct experience of mindful awareness, people confused actually *being* mindful with: *talking about* mindfulness, *developing theories* about mindfulness, *sharing stories* of other people's experience of mindfulness, *envisioning and planning* to be mindful,

being obedient to people who promised them mindful awareness, and *undertaking practices* that might lead to mindful awareness (de Mello, 1990; Kornfield, 2000; Parsons, 1995; Tart, 1994). This self-deceptive capacity, a characteristic of Level 3 awareness, derailed people in their sincere search for mindfulness training, and resulted in patterns of behavior that de Ropp humorously described as the Six Catches*:* the talk-think syndrome, the starry-eyed syndrome, the false-messiah syndrome, the personal salvation syndrome, the Sunday-go-to-meeting syndrome, and the hunt-the-guru syndrome (1968).

It was not difficult either to *be* mindfully aware or, once in that state of awareness, to *do* whatever one was doing in everyday life. What was difficult was to *remember* that such a state of awareness was a possibility (Tart, 1986), to avoid the automatic tendency to *identify* with the automatic thinking process of the human mind that sweeps one away in musings about the past or imagination about the future (Harding, 2002; Tolle, 1999). In order to help people experience mindful awareness in their everyday lives, it was necessary to have them withdraw from the stimulation of daily existence and from the cultural pressure to stay asleep.

Cycles of Withdrawal and Re-entry

In the fifth century B.C., Gautama, frustrated with his lack of progress toward enlightenment through traditional Hindu practices, sat under a tree until, in his own words, he *woke up.* The root word for *buddha* means *to wake up* (Nhat Hanh, 1987), and, over the next 60 years, Gautama developed a pedagogy for teaching this *waking up* to others–in both a monastic setting and in the midst of

everyday life (Armstrong, 2001). Central to this pedagogy was a regular, strategic withdrawal from the stimulation of everyday life, creating a temporary *learning laboratory* in which, over time, mindful awareness could be experienced so fully that people could re-engage their daily lives with this new level of awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Tart, 2001).

This withdrawal was the practice of meditation, of which there were two principal types: *concentration* (*samatha)*–the development of present-moment awareness through focused concentration–and *insight* (*vipassana)*–the development of present-moment awareness through real-time observation of one's own mental workings, feelings, and physical sensations (Goleman, 1988; Gunaratana, 1991; Tart, 2001). Meditative techniques focused attention on all parts of human functioning in order to generate the experience of *being here now*: e.g., following or counting the breath (Rosenberg, 1999); moving slowly with awareness (Nhat Hanh, 1991); visualizing images or symbols (de Ropp, 1968); focusing thinking by mentally repeating sentences (*gathas*) related to current activity (Nhat Hanh, 1975) or concentrating on mental problems (*koans*) that were apparently self-contradictory (D. Suzuki, 1986); and *metta* meditations (Schwartz, 1996) that expanded the feelings of connection and love (Kornfield, 1993).

Insight meditation, also known as *mindfulness* meditation, became the most widely practiced form of meditation within the Buddhist pedagogy. In numerous publications, educators and practitioners bore witness to their experience with insight meditation (Schwartz, 1996; Walsh, 1977, 1978; Wilber, 2000b) and guided people into this experience, encouraging them to seek out

retreat centers where teachers could provide personal instruction (Braza, 1997; Dhiravamsa, 1990; Goldstein, 1987; Gunaratana, 2001; Nhat Hanh, 1993; Kornfield, 1993; Kornfield & Breiter, 2001; Levine, 1989).

The purpose of all this activity was to generate a significant enough experience during withdrawal from everyday living, so that the experience of mindful awareness would *extend* or *generalize* (Tart, 1986, 1990) into the everyday experience of people when they opened their eyes after meditating or returned home from a mindfulness retreat. It was at this point–re-entry into daily life–that other pedagogical devices were employed. Often, they were extensions of what was used in meditation or while on retreat, such as: mentally repeating statements related to the current activity, following the inhalation and exhalation of breath while doing whatever was to be done, using the body's senses to engage as completely as possible with whatever was happening in the moment, adopting physical practices like entering a room with a certain foot or opening a door with a certain hand, and implementing rituals to begin and end the day (de Ropp, 1968; Nhat Hanh, 1992; Tart, 1990, 1994). The problem, of course, was to *remember* to do these things (Tart, 1986). To this end, practitioners advocated making changes in daily routines like inserting gaps in one's schedule, listening to music, slowing down, and taking jobs with less mental and external stimulation (de Ropp, 1968; Nhat Hanh, 1975; Kornfield, 1993; Miller, 2000).

During the past 35 years, many thousands of people read about mindfulness, practiced meditation of one form or another, or attended retreats where awareness practice was offered. Mindfulness was becoming more popular.

Challenges and Possibilities for Mindful Awareness Pedagogy

Popularization and Pedagogical Challenges

A Widespread Application of Mindfulness Technique

During the past three decades, many practitioners (in addition to the authors and fields already cited), who had been exposed to the experience of mindful awareness, and who then had engaged with their field from the perspective of that experience, developed a wide variety of mindfulness applications. Some examples of these applications included the following publications and research studies.

In the field of psychology, the extension of humanistic psychology into transpersonal psychology (Tart, 1975; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993a) spawned a wide application of mindful awareness to the treatment of conditions as varied as depression (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002), alcoholism (Alexander, 1997), eating disorders (Kristeller & Hallett, 1999), aggression within the context of mental illness (Singh, Wahler, Adkins, & Myers, 2003), and the matter of general psychological health and well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003). In addition to the development of a therapeutic modality based on mindfulness (Segal, et al.), the experience of mindfulness has sparked research into the healing capacity of the psychological therapist in secular practice (Hollomon, 2000).

In medicine, Kabat-Zinn's pioneering work with mindfulness-based stress reduction at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center (1990) inspired a host of studies examining the effect of mindfulness-based programs on cancer,

heart disease, skin conditions, recovery from injury, brain disorders, chronic pain, and on medical practice in general (Bonadonna, 2000; Santorelli, 1999). Criticism of his approach notwithstanding (Bishop, 2002), Kabat-Zinn's work was significantly influential in that it provided training for many practitioners who duplicated his methodology (Roth & Stanley, 2002).

In education, a prototype of the *contemplative practitioner* was developed (Miller, 2000), research projects were undertaken to explore the relationship between mindfulness-based meditation and education (Trunnell, 1996), and–of particular interest to this study–a researcher tracked the experience of teachers who augmented their classroom experience with regular meditation and an in-class practice of following the movement of their breath as they taught (Solloway, 1999).

Researchers used mindfulness practice as a foundational element of new qualitative research methodologies (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Heron & Reason, 1997; Kramer, 1999; Kramer & O'Fallon, 1997) and in action research devoted to corporate performance (Torbert, 1991). The practice of Zen was applied to corporate management (Low, 1976). Practitioners explored the relationship between mindfulness and creativity: e.g., as applied to the process of writing (Edelstein, 2001; Goldberg, 1986, 1990) and in regard to the enhanced connection between people that expanded self-awareness brings (Montuori & Conti, 1993), and writers both scientific and popular extended brainwave research into the experience of mindful awareness (Cade, 1989; Hirai, 1978, 1989; Wise, 1997, 2002).

Challenges for Mindfulness Pedagogy

Perhaps not surprisingly, this popularity generated, revealed, and even contributed to the development of challenges faced by this pedagogy for mindful awareness. There were several types of difficulties: exchanging discussion and theory for experience; using the word *mindfulness* to describe related, but fundamentally different experiences; confusing trans-rational experiences with pre-rational (Wilber, 2001a); identifying mindful awareness with the practice of meditation; and living in a culture that is fundamentally insensitive to the experience of mindful awareness.

Exchanging thought for experience

There's a warning in Buddhist literature about not mistaking the finger pointing at the moon for the moon itself. The growing popularity of mindful awareness–the familiarity of people with phrases like be here now, living in the moment, and mindfulness–has made it easy for people to substitute talking about mindful awareness for the actual experience. The human mind loves to discuss, analyze, rationalize, and theorize, and practitioners were cautionary about the human tendency to mistake reflection for practice. The experience of mindful awareness was not the same as thoughts about mindful awareness (Wilber, 2000b), and understanding mindfulness was not the same as actually experiencing it (Tart, 1986). The map was not the territory, and popularization brought many, interesting maps to the table for discussion.

Changing the definition of the word mindfulness

There was an influential, but confusing, use of the term mindfulness by Harvard psychologist, Langer. In her many research projects, and in her two books written for the popular market, Langer (1989, 1997) contrasted "mindfulness" with "mindlessness." She maintained that the latter is understood as (a) being entrapped by the category within which you are thinking, (b) behaving in ways that are automatic and not freely chosen, and (c) appreciating only a single perspective as a basis for action. Mindfulness, therefore, was characterized by the opposite of these characteristics: (a) the capacity to create new categories of thought; (b) openness to new information that leads to new behavior; and (c) an awareness of more than one perspective, more than one way of looking at a situation. To illustrate this understanding, she reported a number of experiments conducted on a variety of subjects, including elderly residents of retirement facilities, university students, and business professionals. The focus of these experiments was to demonstrate that people can develop new ways of thinking, perceiving, and acting when they are presented with circumstances that require them to do so.

When Langer used the word, "mindfulness," she did so in a way that can be characterized as *greater general awareness*. This usage of the term was significantly different from that employed by all the other authors cited in this review. Langer acknowledged the difference she sensed between her use of the word and its traditional meaning. She mentioned "not being fully trained in Eastern thought," and she declared, "I leave it to others to tease out the

similarities and differences between the two concepts of mindfulness" (1989, p. 78-79).

Langer's approach was influential; it was adopted by people as notable as Sternberg (2000), who characterized mindfulness as "the idea that good thinking depends on a habitual tendency to approach problems in a thoughtful and non-impulsive way (Langer, 1989)" (Sternberg, 1999, p. 419.). Langer, Sternberg, and others inspired by their work subtly, used the word *mindfulness* in a subtle, but significantly different way. This diluted cultural understanding of the experiential nature of the term. Mindfulness, in this regard, was simply *being more thoughtful or flexible in one's thinking*. Considering that people were perfectly capable of thoughtfulness and flexibility in the state of waking sleep defined as Third Level awareness (de Ropp, 1968; Tart, 1986), this application of mindfulness confused cultural understanding of the experience of mindful awareness.

Confusing the pre-rational and the trans-rational

Transpersonal psychology added a third category of human development–the trans-personal–to the existing categories of pre-personal and personal. Applying this to individual human development (setting aside for the moment the matter of collective development), this fourth wave of psychology (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993b) maintained that human beings began their lives in a pre-rational state, proceed to a rational state, and then had the possibility of experiencing trans-rational states of awareness. Wilber offered a helpful distinction that he called the pre-trans fallacy (Wilber, 2001a). He maintained that, because pre-

rational experiences (e.g., childhood innocence, floods of emotion, and lack of differentiation between self and object) and trans-rational experiences (e.g., aware of being aware, sense of connectedness between self and others) are both non-rational in nature, it was possible for people to confuse trans-rational experiences with pre-rational experiences. This confusion led, unfortunately, to several difficulties.

When people failed to distinguish pre-rational experiences (e.g., instinctual sexual excitement) from trans-rational experiences (e.g., a profound sense of respect and love for a teacher or a student), unresolved personality conflicts and immaturity were sometimes confused with enlightened behavior (Kornfield, 2000; Wilber, 2001a). It was for this reason that the Buddhist tradition maintained that mindful awareness should always be taught within a system of ethics (Kornfield, 1993). When trans-rational experiences were mistaken for pre-rational experiences, well-meaning parents, friends, therapists, and pastors often failed to recognize that these experiences were *spiritual emergencies* as opposed to psychological breakdowns (S. Grof, 2000). This situation led to more careful refinement of understanding and response to non-rational experiences (C. Grof, 1993).

Furthermore, a failure to distinguish pre-rational states from trans-rational led to an under-valuing of the ego-strength required to take one's place as a mature, contributing adult in everyday life (Schwartz, 1996; Wilber, 2001a). The experience of mindful awareness included feelings of grief and fear as well as peace and joy. From a trans-rational perspective, these difficult feelings were

understandable as gateways to compassion and courage in the face of everyday life conditions that need addressing. From a pre-rational perspective, these difficult feelings were easily overwhelming. The reason that teachers of mindful awareness stressed *engagement* with the world was because they realized that Level 4 awareness developed human capacities for compassion, courage, and discernment that were needed in order to face and transform suffering on an individual and collective level (Nhat Hanh, 1987; Sogyal, 1994). Failure to appreciate the *trans*-rational nature of mindful awareness led people to *disengage* from their daily lives whenever that engagement brought painful feelings instead of peaceful ones.

Identifying mindful awareness with the practice of meditation

Leading teachers of mindfulness clearly stated that the purpose of meditation was to empower people to generate mindful awareness in everyday life (Nhat Hanh, 1975; Kornfield, 1993; Tart, 2001). Several factors, systemic to the Buddhist paradigm of practice and to its meeting of modern American culture, mitigated against the effectiveness of this pedagogical strategy.

First, there was the too-easy identification of the *experience* of mindfulness with the *practice* of mindfulness (insight or *vipassana*) meditation. This strategic withdrawal from the stimulation of daily life–intended to be a temporary laboratory for the generation of mindful awareness which was then to be taken into an engagement with daily life–became, for many people, *the primary time in their daily lives* when mindful awareness was experienced. When influential Buddhist teachers–in an effort to help students understand that what

they were experiencing in meditation was to be experienced in their daily lives– spoke of making daily life a meditation (Gunaratana, 1991) or when they stated that when mindfulness was present, meditation was present (Nhat Hanh, 1993), it was easy for modern, Western students to believe that the object of mindfulness was to meditate *instead of* being mindfully aware in the conduct of their daily activities. As a result, people developed a belief that *to become mindful*, they had to *withdraw* from their daily lives into meditation, either at home or on retreat.

This identification of mindful awareness with meditation led naturally to a separation of everyday life (filled with distracting stimulation) from mindful experience (which occurred during meditation). There has been a tendency in *vipassana* practice toward aloofness and lack of emotionality (Helminski, 1992; Schwartz, 1996; Tart, 1986), and some Buddhist teachers have addressed this tendency by emphasizing the development of heart, passion, and engagement (Nhat Hanh, 1987; Kornfield, 1993). When people viewed meditation as an *escape* or a *corrective* to the rigors and emotional struggle of daily life, when they regarded a *retreat* as a *relief* from the trials of everyday living, they separated their experience of mindful awareness from the activities of their daily lives.

Furthermore, there was an inherent clash between the pedagogical requirement for frequent and sustained meditative practice (as a regular part of daily life and on periodic, prolonged retreats) and the demands of modern Western living that afforded little time for withdrawal. For nearly everyone, and especially for people who are engaged in positions of influence in our society, the demands of work and family were significant, and *relatively few people could*

invest enough time in meditation and retreat to have that experience of mindful awareness extend itself into their daily lives in a sustained fashion. This was a fundamental limitation of the pedagogy that relied so intensely on the experience of strategic withdrawal from daily life (Schwartz, 1996; Tart, 1990, 1994).

Furthermore, when people participated in retreats, the learning environment was so completely different from their day-to-day lives, that it was often the case that within a short time of returning home, the capacity for mindful awareness–so evident during the retreat–significantly or even completely dissipated (Tart, 1990; Walsh, 1978).

Living in a culture insensitive to mindful awareness

In spite of the rapid expansion of publications concerned with mindfulness, retreat centers providing mindfulness training, and the extension of mindful awareness into many sectors of life, people interested in generating mindful awareness in their everyday lives lived in a culture that was profoundly unaware and unappreciative of the value of mindful awareness. Kornfield (2001b) shared a story about an experience Ram Dass had while visiting India. Ram Dass walked from a retreat center to a nearby village to purchase some supplies at one of the village stores. As he approached the counter, the clerk took one look at him and said with a smile, "For you, today, there is no charge." This clerk, and the people of this culture, appreciated the experience of mindful awareness: they knew it when it was present, and they respected and valued its presence. Our culture provided little, if any, support for people who attempted to experience mindful awareness in the midst of everyday life.

Attractors, Split-attention, and Pedagogical Possibilities

Attractors and Emergence of New Possibilities of Consciousness

Theorists extended the understanding of *states* of consciousness into *structures* or *stages* of consciousness, following a tradition of thinking that included the work of philosophers and theologians (e.g., Hegel, Bergson, Teilhard de Chardin, and Gebser) and integrated the individual experience of mindful awareness with the collective expansion of consciousness for humanity as a whole (Combs, 1996; Feuerstein, 1995; Ghose, 1973; Tart, 2000; Wilber, 2000a, 2001a). They concluded that developmental forces were active within the apparently chaotic fabric of existence (Briggs & Peat, 1999), and that these forces were integral to the emergence of the possibility for mindful awareness in human life on both an individual level (during the span of a person's lifetime) and a collective level (over time, for humanity as a whole). A complete explication of consciousness theory was not appropriate for this review, but three theoretical constructs were illuminating: (a) mindful awareness as part of an emergence of consciousness, (b) the relationship between *attractors* and reality, and (c) the interdependence of individual and collective human development.

Mindful awareness is part of a larger emergence of consciousness

Theorists postulated that within life itself there existed a creative, evolutionary force–a synthesizing medium (Hegel, 1967), an élan vital (Bergson, 1975)–responsible for the emergence of a new form of consciousness available to human beings–an integral consciousness (Gebser, 1985), a supermind (Ghose, 1973), pulling and/or pushing humanity to an omega point (Teilhard de Chardin,

1965). This force exerted a pressure on the extraordinarily sensitive bodies of human beings that resulted in breakthroughs of new levels of consciousness (Feuerstein, 1995). These breakthroughs were part of an ontological thrust for greater consciousness in which Spirit becomes conscious of itself; this didn't guarantee a successful result, but it offered grounds for hope that solutions to the self-destructive behavior of human beings were possible (Combs, 1996; Feuerstein, 1995; Wilber, 2000a). The emergence of mindful awareness in our culture during the past 45 years can be viewed as part of this larger emergence of consciousness in humanity as a whole.

Attractors function in relationship to reality

The integration of chaos theory (Briggs & Peat, 1999) with consciousness theory included the notion of attractors, patterns or states of activity into which systems tended to fall; these attractors were like basins into which marbles rolled when they come into contact with the downward sloping edges of the basin (Combs, 1996). Mindful awareness pedagogy could be understood as relying upon one type of attractors–nurtured during periods of meditation and retreat–to exert an awakening pull on human consciousness in order to overcome another type of attractors–the automatic, meaning-making activity of the human mind–which pulled human beings into waking sleep. This was another way to frame the human struggle to move from Third Level awareness to Fourth Level awareness. The critical application of this theory to this study was the fact that both types of attractors operated in relation to reality, to the real-time events of the everyday lives of human beings. It was in relation to daily events that attractors exerted

their pull. This reflected the emphasis of mindful awareness teachers on engagement with reality (Nhat Hanh, 1975; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Kornfield, 1993; Tart, 1994), an emphasis that was reflected in a saying attributed to the Sarmouni Brotherhood, the (actual?) sect with whom Gurdjieff supposedly studied:

> There is no God but Reality.
> To seek Him elsewhere
> Is the action of the Fall. (Tart, 1986, p. 21)

Individual development and collective development are interdependent

The interdependence of individual and collective human development was fundamental to theories of consciousness (Wilber, 2000a). It provided a framework in which an individual person's experience of waking up was a contribution to the possibility of a global awakening spoken of by teachers of mindful awareness (Nhat Hanh, 1986; Helminski, 1992; Miller, 1994). This was illustrated especially well with regard to the contribution to human development made through the life and work of Ghose:

> The idea that a few individuals, or even a single person, can break evolutionary ground for the entire human species seems at first glance, to be unwarranted . . . .How . . . could it be possible for Sri Ghose and the Mother, sitting in their ashram in south India, to open an evolutionary gateway for the rest of humankind?...The answer . . . may in part have to do with the idea . . . that the direction of the evolutionary ascent is already contained in matter itself. From this point of view, Sri Ghose and the Mother were simply vehicles, and as such were, in a sense, test cases for the entire species. (Combs, 1996, p. 149)

Split-attention and Pedagogical Possibilities

Split-attention as introduced by Gurdjieff

The technique of split-attention was central to this study, and a clear understanding of its background was important to this review. G.I. Gurdjieff was

one of the most interesting and pivotal figures in the esoteric tradition. He reportedly studied with the mythical (and perhaps Sufi-oriented) Sarmouni Brotherhood, somewhere in the Middle East, before emerging in the first half of the twentieth century as a teacher concerned with liberating people from the machine thinking to which they were prone. Although Gurdjieff produced one very accessible book (1969), he intentionally made the rest of his writings extremely difficult to understand, and his thinking was expressed primarily through the writings of others (Bennett, 1973; Burton, 1995; Needleman & Baker, 2000; Nicoll, 1996; Ouspensky, 1977). Gurdjieff recognized the fundamental sleepiness of ordinary waking life, and his method for helping people achieve the self-observation inherent to being awake– a Third Level state of consciousness in which people were aware of being aware–was a practice he called self-remembering. In this practice, people deliberately split off a small part of their awareness which they then used to monitor their experience while they continued to do what they were doing (Burton, 1995; Ouspensky, 1977; Tart, 1994).

The practice of split-attention was essential to what Gurdjieff called the Fourth Way, a time-honored focus on spirituality in the midst of everyday life that has always been a focus of Sufism.

> The Fourth Way is a term introduced by G.I. Gurdjieff to describe the spiritual path of someone who lives and works within society, in contrast to the way of the ascetic, the monk, and the yogi, who traditionally separate themselves from ordinary life . . . the Fourth Way, however, has been the primary way within the Islamic world for fourteen centuries. (Helminski, 1992, p. 41)
>
> Gurdjieff's path is primarily a matter of mindfulness in everyday life. He taught, to the best of my knowledge, almost nothing in the way of formal, sitting meditation practices as we would ordinarily categorize them–although they were introduced

> to some extent by some of his students later. His theory was that the place in which you create all your trouble is ordinary life, and so that is both the place you need mindfulness the most and the best possible place to learn it. (Tart, 1994, pp. 35-36)

Gurdjieff's technique of split-attention was described by Tart in this way:

> Deliberately split the arrow of attention, so that, no matter what happens, you never allow all your attention to be taken by anything, be it external stimulus or internal reaction. A small amount of it is always kept in the role of observer. (Tart, 2001, p. 118)

This role of *observer* is exactly the same as the capacity of being a *witness* to one's life (Wilber, 2000b) or having the faculty of a *watchman at the gate* (de Ropp, 1968), and it allows people to live with wide-open eyes in the midst of their everyday lives, responding to life as it really is, instead of what their wandering thoughts deem it to be.

> I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don't even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child–our own two eyes. All is a miracle. (Nhat Hanh, 1975, p. 13)

The practice of Gurdjieffian technique remained relatively unknown, primarily, because the practitioners of his methods, following a tradition often associated with Sufism, believed that learning mindful awareness required a curiosity and exertion of effort that their secrecy inspired in potential students (Gurdjieff, 1969). This study was undertaken with respect for the sensitivities of Gurdjieff himself and his current students, and it was not intended to popularize the esoteric teachings associated with Gurdjieff. However, this study did intend to align itself with the spirit of people like Ouspensky (1971, 1977), Needleman (2000), Tart (1986, 1990, 1994), and Burton (1995) who saw in Gurdjieff's work

significant benefit for humanity and who endeavored to make accessible for others helpful parts of the tradition carried forward by Gurdjieff.

The possibility of an augmented pedagogy

The practice of split-attention was significant in that it allowed people to use the events of their everyday lives as the laboratory for generating mindful awareness. It was originally intended to aid self-observation, but it was also possible to use split-attention to lessen or even halt the automatic process of identification with the mind's thinking process, and thus deliver someone to an immediate experience of mindful awareness in the midst of whatever everyday activity they were doing. This represented a significant addition to the current pedagogies of mindful awareness training that required people to withdraw from everyday life in order to generate an experience of mindful awareness that could then be taken back into everyday existence.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Situating the Question in a Research Paradigm

A Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research dates to the 1920's and was developed to understand the experiences of human group life in a way that is respectful of the setting in which people live and sensitive to the meaning-making activity of the human mind (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). There are five characteristics that define qualitative research (Merriam, 2001), and they provide the rationale for using a qualitative approach for this study.

1. *There is a desire to understand experience from the participants' point of view.* This matched the aim of my study. I was eager to learn what happened when my co-researchers and I linked mindful awareness with activities fundamental to our everyday lives. Furthermore, I wanted to distinguish between their experience (*etic*) and my own (*emic*) to broaden my understanding of everyday mindfulness.

2. *The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis.* This understanding of the researcher's role dovetailed with my long-standing interest in and experience of mindful awareness. The experience of daily mindfulness was something that I had explored in a fundamentally heuristic fashion: an internal search through which I had discovered the nature and meaning of the

experience (Moustakas, 1990). As the participants and I undertook this exploration, I was required to (a) remain aware of and use my own experience of mindfulness to (b) understand and describe theirs. It was my experience of mindfulness that (a) informed my sensitivity during data collection and (b) clarified my perspective during data analysis. In addition, I needed to embrace and be successful a multiplicity of roles: researcher, instructor, co-participant, and coach. These requirements were challenging, and they aligned fully with this defining characteristic of qualitative research.

3. *It usually involves fieldwork*. Exploring mindfulness with others required being *inside* the experience with them, not outside watching their experience. In this sense, I undertook this study co-operatively: adopting a participative, person-centered approach of doing research *with* people instead of on or about them (Heron, 1996). Qualitative research had a naturalistic quality that allowed actual human experience to emerge in an atmosphere that was non-manipulative and non-controlling (Patton, 2002). I reasoned that my inquiry into everyday mindfulness could not really be explored theoretically; it was fundamentally an *experience*, not a concept, and an experience that took place in the context of daily life.

4. *It primarily employs an inductive research strategy.* Qualitative research is particularly oriented toward discovery, exploration, and the experience of inductive logic which moves from observation to the

discernment of themes and patterns (Patton, 2002). I recognized induction as the strategy required to explore what happened when people linked mindful awareness to activities inherent to their everyday lives. I regarded mindful awareness as a subjective experience which could not be deductively evaluated by applying pre-set objective criteria.

5. *Its product is richly descriptive*. I concluded that it was a rich, thick description of participants' experience that would generate answers to the research questions that had fueled this study.

Research Paradigms

A paradigm is a worldview, a way of reflecting upon and making sense of the complexities of the real world (Patton, 2002). It is an overarching framework that organizes people's approach to being in the world (Reason & Bradbury, 2001), a lens through which they look at life. It generates a basic set of beliefs that guide their actions (Lincoln & Guba, 2000), and it contains a set of core convictions regarding ontology (how they understand the nature of reality), epistemology (what they believe about knowledge and how they can come to know the world), and axiology (their operational values).

Paradigms advance assumptions about the social world, how science should be conducted, and what constitutes legitimate problems, solutions, and criteria of proof (Firestone, Gioia & Pietre, and Kuhn as cited in Creswell, 2003). They shape research by addressing six questions:

1. What do we believe about the nature of reality?

2. How do we know what we know?

3. How should we study the world?

4. What is worth knowing?

5. What questions should we ask?

6. How do we personally engage in inquiry? (Patton, 2002)

There are five major interpretive paradigms that structure qualitative research: (a) positivism, (b) postpositivism, (c) the various permutations of critical theory , (d) constructivism, and (e) the participatory paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). I concluded that the first four of these paradigms were not adequate for this research project:

- *Positivism* maintains that there is a *real* reality and that it can be apprehended by researchers who employ chiefly quantitative methods of an experimental, fundamentally manipulative quality. Its ontology is described as *naïve realism*, its epistemology is dualist/objective, and the object of its research is the accumulation of facts by which one can exert prediction and control (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). From a positivist point of view, mindful awareness was not a legitimate subject to study: it was not objectively verifiable, controllable, or experimentally predictable.
- *Postpositivism* amends positivism by maintaining that, while there is indeed a *real* reality, it can be apprehended only imperfectly–although it is possible, using empirical evidence, to differentiate between claims

as being more or less plausible and to distinguish between belief and valid belief (Campbell as cited in Patton, 2002). While postpositivism softens the absolutism of positivism's claims to *know* reality absolutely, nevertheless its research focus is still on generalizations and cause-and-effect linkages in the *real* world (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). The empirical nature of postpositivism, its experimental research methods, and its research goal of prediction and control rendered this paradigm inappropriate for an inquiry into the experience of everyday mindfulness.

- *Critical theory* focuses on how injustice and subjugation affect the experiences of people and their understandings of the world in which they live (Patton, 2002). Critical theory research–which includes paradigms such as feminist, post-structural, and queer theory - focuses on challenging existing power-structures and facilitating action among those who are being subjugated (Tisdell as cited in Merriam & Associates, 2002). Critical theory's ontology focuses on historical realism, a virtual reality which is shaped by cultural values which have crystallized over time, and its dialectical methodology focuses on the development of historical and sociological insights which can liberate groups of people oppressed by these crystallized values (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). I concluded that the experience of mindful awareness tended to make cultural values and matters of social oppression disappear in the experience of waking up from the profound sleep that

oppressed us all. The *focus* of critical theory didn't address the mindful experience.

- *Constructivism* begins with the premise that the human world is fundamentally different from the natural, physical world and that people construct their version of reality through the meaning-making activity of the individual mind, which creates for each of us a unique experience (Crotty as cited in Patton, 2002). Constructivist researchers study the multiple realities that are constructed by people and the implications of those constructions for their own lives and for their interactions with others (Patton, 2002). Constructivism's epistemology is based upon individual reconstructions of experience which tend to coalesce around a consensus with each other, and this epistemology leads to five primary assumptions:
    1. "Truth" is a matter of consensus among informed and sophisticated constructors, not of correspondence with objective reality.
    2. "Facts" have no meaning except within some value framework; hence there cannot be an objective assessment of any proposition.
    3. "Causes" and "effects" do not exist except by imputation.
    4. Phenomena can only be understood within the context in which they are studied.
    5. Data derived from constructivist inquiry have neither special status nor legitimization; they represent simply another construction to be

> taken into account in the move toward consensus. (Lincoln & Guba, 2000)

Constructivism is based on ontological relativism and epistemological subjectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) and, at its most extreme, doesn't allow *real* reality to be known by human beings. Even though most researchers did not accept the extreme, relativistic position that no reality exists independent of human perception (Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995), and even though researchers had made efforts to modify the understanding of constructivism in a way that allowed for the interpenetration of *real* reality with *constructed* reality–e.g., *dualist constructionism* (Crotty as cited in Patton, 2002)–the basic ontology and epistemology of constructivism made problematic the use of this paradigm in a study of everyday mindfulness that aimed to explore the possibility of everyday events serving a *reminding function* for mindful awareness in human beings.

A Participatory Paradigm and its Suitability for this Study

A central tenet of qualitative research is that all the elements of a study are affected by its theoretical framework (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Merriam, 2001; Patton, 2002). It is helpful to adopt a *nesting strategy* for understanding the relationship between the researcher's theoretical framework, problem statement, and the purpose of the study (Merriam, 2001). Below I describe the particular nest that was home to this study.

The paradigm that I used to frame my approach to this study was the Participatory Inquiry Paradigm, which is based on a "subjective-objective ontology; an extended epistemology of experiential, presentational, propositional

and practical ways of knowing; a methodology based on co-operative relationships between co-researchers; and an axiology which affirms the primary value of practical knowing in the service of human flourishing" (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 274). The paradigm is recognized as distinct from the four other basic worldviews elaborated above (Lincoln & Guba, 2000), and it supports a research approach that is especially congruent with qualitative methods (Patton, 2002).

The participatory paradigm framed ontology in a way that allows for the interpenetration of *real* reality with the *subjective* reality constructed by the meaning-making activity of the human mind; furthermore, its epistemological stance permitted exploring the relationship between these two realities and human awareness (where the possibility of mindful awareness resides):

> The mind . . . is more extensive than any worldview on which it takes its current cognitive stance. Hence it is possible and essential to expand our awareness to articulate any fundamental way in which we frame our world. (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 274)

This paradigm recognized that there could be transcendental grounds for truth *independent* of human constructions of reality–which positivism and postpositivism did not allow–and it avoided confusing *relative* truth with nihilistic skepticism–which critical theory and, especially, constructivism did not completely avoid (Heron & Reason, 1997).

The ultimate aim in this study was to make mindful awareness more accessible for human beings in their everyday lives. This was an enterprise that could be regarded as fundamentally spiritual *and* fundamentally practical in nature. It was fully rooted in an engagement with *real* reality as it presented itself to us every day of our lives–in all of its sublimity *and* all of its fearfulness. This

paradigm opened the possibility of exploring the daily confrontation between *real* reality and the *constructed* reality generated by our own minds and upheld by the consensus consciousness of the people around us (Tart, 1986); and it allowed for the transformational impact that mindfully embracing this confrontation can bring:

> The participatory worldview allows us as human personas to know that we are a part of the whole . . . it allows us to join with fellow humans in collaborative forms of inquiry. It places us back in relation with the living world . . .
>
> Our work . . . in mindfulness practices . . . and our attempts at aware everyday living all convince us that experiential encounter with the presence of the world is the ground of our being and knowing . . . [and] *cannot* be confused with our symbolic constructs . . . This, we argue, is not a dissociated metaphysical statement but an expression of a radical empiricism which can be tested through experiential inquiry. (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 275)

It is, especially, the extended epistemology of the participatory inquiry paradigm that made this paradigm valuable for my study. Beyond the two categories of (a) *real* reality and (b) humanly *constructed* reality, there is more to explore; at minimum the following can be added, (c) human feelings and sensations and (d) awareness itself (Torbert, 1991). The participatory paradigm includes four ways of knowing which allowed me to approach my inquiry in the rich and various ways that its subject required:

- *Experiential* knowing is a direct encounter with someone or something, knowing through a participative, empathetic connection at the level of being.

- *Presentational* knowing is symbolized in varied forms such as art, music, images, and words, and it emerges from an experiential knowing of something.
- *Propositional* knowing is conceptual in its grasp and expression, and it is presented in statements and theories.
- *Practical* knowing is knowing how to do something, expressed in a skill or capacity for activity. (Heron, 1998)

The participatory inquiry paradigm is applicable to inquiries that involve the participation of and collaboration with others. This paradigm is "especially appropriate [for] . . . facilitating collaboration with co-researchers [and] . . . supporting democratic dialogue and deliberation" (Patton, 2002, p. 175). Furthermore, this paradigm supports the contention that "knowledge cannot be 'owned' and collaborative research requires a noncompetitive relationship among the co-researchers (Brooks & Watkins, 1994, p. 11). The emergence of the cooperative inquiry methodology (Heron, 1996) that accompanied this extended epistemology demonstrates this point.

My research project was concerned with the experience of *everyday mindfulness*: being *fully present* and *awake* to the moment-by-moment happenings of one's everyday life instead of being caught up in memories of the past or projections of future possibilities. In fact, being fully present in the moment is *very* difficult to do in a consistent and sustained fashion, especially in the complexity and turmoil of everyday life (Tart, 1990). I wanted to explore the possibility of (a) *linking* mindful awareness to activities that are fundamental to

daily life, and (b) seeing if our daily experiences would then *wake us up* into mindful awareness.

The participatory paradigm was appropriate for my study because what prevents us from being mindful is the mental activity of *assigning meanings* to our everyday experiences. People can be described as *meaning-making machines:* the epistemological process by which the human mind *assigns meaning* is often *fully automatic* for most people, and, as a result, their patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving are usually habitual and pre-conditioned (Gurdjieff as cited in Ouspensky, 1977). Furthermore, there is a collective or cultural dynamic to the meaning-making activity of the human mind; our *individual* meaning-making activity is strongly influenced by our *collective* meaning-making activity (Tart, 1986).

The participatory paradigm provides a framework for exploring how mindful awareness impacts the human ability to examine our assigned meanings and determine their adequacy or validity. This point of view was especially appropriate for my study, because this lens allowed me to view and understand three matters vital to this study: (a) how a specialized environment like a retreat supports the experience of mindfulness, (b) how a return to daily life contributes to a *loss* of mindful awareness, and (c) how linking mindful awareness to the fundamental activities of daily life can result in the experience of everyday events *waking people up* into mindful awareness.

It is the *collective* meaning-making activity that is responsible for the *reminding function* provided by (a) retreat participants who–by their activity and

words–remind each other to remember to be mindful and (b) the family, friends, and colleagues of our daily lives who–by *their* automaticity and mindlessness, *remind* each other to stay asleep during their everyday lives (Tart, 1990). This paradigm's ontology of a *participative reality*–its stance that reality is *co-created* by the human mind and by the cosmos itself (Heron & Reason, 1997)–provided a helpful lens through which to explore the *collective* power that people and events in our daily life have upon our capacity to be mindful in the midst of our daily lives.

Finally, the participatory paradigm provided a helpful perspective for exploring the *transformative* effects of mindful awareness in daily life. Transformative learning involves shifting the paradigms of thought by which we live (Mezirow, 2000), and this shift requires addressing the way that we form our meanings (Kegan, 2000). This paradigm provided a framework for exploring the transformational impact of the meeting between (a) *real* reality and (b) human *constructed* reality as this meeting occurs in the context of (c) increased human awareness.

Selection of the Research Methodology

Qualitative Research Methodologies

The great variety in qualitative research methodologies/strategies requires a thoughtful approach to what has been called the *choreography* of qualitative research design (Janesick, 2000). Depending on the perspective of an author or authors, qualitative methodologies fall into 10 categories (Denzin & Lincoln,

2000), eight (Merriam & Associates, 2002), or 26 (Janesick(2000). It is also possible to approach the matter of research design by first avoiding the question of methodologies and focusing instead on the basic purposes of the research in question (Patton, 2002). I will review the basic qualitative research strategies, and then I will explain why the case study was the most appropriate methodology for my research and how the inclusion of elements from phenomenology strengthened my methodological approach.

Qualitative research methodologies can be divided into eight types (Merriam & Associates, 2002):

- *Basic Interpretive Qualitative Study*–the researcher is interested in (a) how people interpret their experiences, (b) how they construct their worlds, and (c) what meaning they attribute to their experiences. The researcher serves as a mediator of the meaning by using an inductive method and presenting findings in a descriptive manner.
- *Phenomenology*–the researcher focuses on the structure of an experience or its essence. Researchers bracket their personal assumptions and worldviews and analyze the individual experiences of participants to discover the essence of the phenomenon under study. (Although I didn't undertake a purely phenomenological study–I developed a *description* of each person's experience, not an *analysis* of the way each person understood or structured his or her experience–I incorporated the phenomenological emphasis on *experience*.)

- *Grounded Theory*–the researcher inductively derives a theory that is grounded in the data of the matter under study. Researchers use the constant comparative method of analyzing data, comparing one unit of data to another, in an attempt to discern the conceptual elements of an emerging theory.
- *Ethnographic Study*–the researcher studies human culture and society by focusing on the attitudes, values, and convictions that shape the lives of people in a given environment. This methodology is grounded in anthropology, and it presents a sociocultural interpretation of the data it collects.
- *Narrative Analysis*–the researcher uses life stories as the primary data for analysis and approaches this data from one of three perspectives: (a) psychological (regarding motivations and inner forces that shape experience), (b) biographical (the relationship of a person to their society), or (c) discourse analysis (analyzing the form and content of the story itself to cast light on the meaning of the text).
- *Critical Qualitative Research*–the researcher seeks to uncover the beliefs, assumptions, and convictions of society and culture that limit the options faced by people in that environment. The focus here is on contextual understanding and the liberation of the people involved. Participatory Action Research belongs to this methodological category.

- *Postmodern Research*–in this category are the various postmodern or post-structural approaches that challenge the form and categories of traditional qualitative methodologies. Researchers invent new formats in which to collect, analyze, and present data in an effort to break free from the assumptions that guide and, in this view *limit*, the various qualitative methodologies.
- *Case Study*–this is the method I used, and an explanation of this method and its suitability for this project now follows.

Case Study and its Suitability for the Project

The case study is "an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as [a] . . . group . . . [which] seeks to describe the phenomenon in depth" (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Case studies present the actual descriptions of human experience that people have formulated for themselves; they provide a forum for the most fundamental human activity of understanding experience, and, in this way, they assist readers in the construction of knowledge (Stake, 2000). I decided that such description was critical in exploring the human experience of mindful awareness in everyday life.

A case study approach was ideal for my inquiry, because case study has been recognized as particularly helpful in exploring and understanding what happens when people undertake certain activities that are bounded by (a) type of activity and (b) time of activity (House as cited in Patton, 2002; Merriam, 2001; Stake, 1995). *Case study* is a term with multiple meanings. It refers to a specific *way* of collecting, organizing, and analyzing data and it refers to the analytical

process itself (Patton, 2002). Case study is best thought of as a *unit of analysis* (Yin, 1994), *a choice of what to study* (Stake, 1995), or *a bounded system* (Merriam, 2001).

In this study, there were four *cases:* one for each of us who participated as co-researchers in a 90-day inquiry that explored the experience of linking mindful awareness to everyday activities. There are four disciplinary orientations for case study: ethnographic, historical, psychological, and sociological (Merriam, 2001). This study was *psychological* in orientation, and it was particularly concerned with *how* mindful awareness is generated in the midst of everyday life. There are three fundamental intentions underlying case study: description, interpretation, and evaluation (Merriam, 2001). This coincided perfectly with the aims of my study which were to (a) describe what happened when we linked mindfulness to everyday activities, (b) interpret our experiences, individually and collectively, and (c) notice whether or not mindful awareness extended itself more fully into our everyday lives.

There is a further distinction between intrinsic and instrumental case studies (Stake, 1995). This was an *intrinsic* case study, because I was interested in this *particular* case for its own sake, not because it illuminated another problem of greater interest to me. Lastly, case study was ideal for the research because case studies have proven particularly useful for studying educational innovations (Merriam, 2001), and an innovation in the pedagogy of teaching mindfulness was the focus of the research work.

Since I was focusing on the *experience* of each of the four co-researchers, there was a strong phenomenological element to this study. Although this study didn't aspire to analyzing *how* each participant created his or her experience, it did focus on the *describing* the experience of each participant. In this study, my work as co-researcher reflected many of the characteristics ascribed to phenomenological researchers who, in their work:

- focus on a human experience;
- directly interview people who have the experience;
- carefully capture what they say in order to get "inside" their experience, from their point of view;
- focus on the interpretation given by people to their experience, both as individuals and in relationship to others;
- accept the paradigm that there is an essence to shared experience;
- trust their own experience, and, bracketing (undertaking "epoch") this experience when needed, work carefully to appreciate the experience as undergone by others;
- undertake time for incubation, reflection, and great depth of interviewing and reflexivity; and
- continually reduce the experiences in question to "meaning units" of essence, in order to fundamentally describe them and describe the way they are being interpreted by individuals and by the group in which the individuals are situated. (Merriam, 2002; Moustakas, 1990; Patton, 2002).

I incorporated these phenomenological research practices into the collection, analysis, and presentation of data.

I conclude the discussion of case study methodology by noting that there are specific limitations associated with case study research (Merriam, 2001). Here are those limitations and my comments about them:

- *A researcher may not have the time or money to devote to such an undertaking.* I was able to support a 90-day project. Given that mindful awareness often disappears for hours or even days at a time for people who are focusing on the experience (Tart, 1986, 1994), three months of focused reflection provided an adequate context for exploring the impact in our daily lives of using split-attention to link mindful awareness with everyday activities.
- *Case studies can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, leading to erroneous conclusions.* I endeavored to counter this tendency of case study research by employing seven different data sources, a participatory perspective that involved member checks and input from the co-researchers, and a careful process of analysis that grounded conclusions in the data. Although I sought to identify experiential elements common to each of the four cases, the fact that I designated each person as a case argued for the idiosyncratic nature of individual experience and mitigated against oversimplifying or exaggerating that experience.

- *Case studies tend to masquerade as the whole when they are but a slice of life.* This concern was important to keep in mind, for even though I avoided generalizing the findings to other groups or situations, the presentation of findings, in and of itself, tends to suggest the possibility of generalization. In presenting the results of this inquiry, I have attempted to accurately and compellingly present (a) each person's experience as idiosyncratic and (b) our common experiences as common to *our group* as opposed to people in general. In fact, one of our conclusions was that the *activity of inquiry itself* was central to our experience; we began the inquiry assuming that we would each have our *own* experience, as would others who ever undertook this practice for themselves. This attitude discourages readers' impulses to generalize to other groups or situations (Merriam, 2001), and, by its focus, encourages curiosity among readers as to whether or not undertaking such an inquiry may be appropriate for *their* lives.
- *Case studies are limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator.* I took seriously the responsibility to be completely transparent about all elements of the inquiry: its purpose, its activity, and the presentation of its conclusions. Although I necessarily developed the research question and methodology before inviting the co-researchers to participate, I secured their agreement on these matters before beginning the inquiry, and all subsequent decisions

were taken as a group: including when and where to meet, how to spend our time, and what exactly we learned. We shared responsibility for instructing each other on the practice of split-attention, and, in response to our experience, we changed some of the original planning as to how the study would be conducted: we replaced individual interviews with conference calls, shifted and lengthened the research context *from* a month-long inquiry with a follow-up 30 days later *to* a 90-day experience that included 70 hours of group conversation and thirteen weeks of journal reflection and conference calls.

- *Selecting only the data that proves the points favored by the investigator.* I was familiar with this temptation, especially because I was eager to find that linking mindfulness to daily activities is as effective for others as it had been for me. However, I had an even *greater* desire to learn where it was of value and where it was *not*, so that I could use that learning to make a contribution to the pedagogy of providing mindful awareness to others. Also, I was trustful of the fact that, in my experience, mindfulness was *self-validating*: inaccurate interpretations or exaggerated conclusions about this experience tended to stand out in a rather grotesque fashion.
- *Political bias due to funding of the study.* This limitation didn't apply to the study, for I was not providing these results to an individual or institution that was funding the inquiry.

Description of the Methodology

Basic Case Study Methodology

There are three fundamental steps to constructing a case study: (a) assemble the raw case data, (b) construct a case record, and (c) write a final case study narrative. The raw data can be a variety of material including documents, interviews, images, and written text. The case record is a condensation of the raw data that has been collected; it is organized, arranged, and edited into a workable and understandable form. The final narrative is a descriptive picture of the *case*: the unit under study. Case studies aim to be holistic and context sensitive, and the resulting narrative, ideally, takes the reader fully into the experience of the case itself (Patton, 2002).

The research strategy was to gather a group of four people (including myself) who were interested in and familiar with the experience of mindfulness and who had experienced difficulty in experiencing mindfulness in the midst of their everyday lives. We participated as co-researchers in a 90-day inquiry in which we practiced using split-attention to link mindful awareness to activities that were fundamental to our daily lives. We explored the core research question–W*hat happens when people link awareness to everyday activities?*–through an inductive process of: (a) richly describing each of our experiences; (b) finding patterns *within* each person's experience and *across* the experiences of the whole group; and (c) drawing conclusions regarding our experience.

Selection of the Participants

The most appropriate sampling approach for qualitative research is non-probabilistic sampling, the most common form of which is *purposeful* or *purposive* sampling (Merriam, 2001; Patton, 2002). Researchers need to select a sample that will yield the most information about the matter under inquiry, identify the criteria they use to select their purposeful sample, and provide a rationale for the criteria they choose.

The criteria I employed to select participants included:

- *A group of four people.* In order to create an information-rich description of the experience of everyday mindfulness, I generated data from multiple sources, resulting in over 600 pages of transcribed conversations, journal entries, observations, and project journal reflections. Restricting the inquiry to four persons meant that I was able to examine each person's experience in significant depth and breadth.
- *Diversity of everyday experience.* This is study focused on the experience of mindfulness in the midst of everyday activities with the possibility in mind of those everyday activities becoming occasions for people *waking up* rather than *remaining asleep*. I wanted some diversity in terms of people's living conditions and working circumstances to provide opportunities to contrast and compare

experiences among participants. We had some diversity in lifestyle, and professional activities, and day-to-day experiences, but not as much as I had originally envisioned.

- *Familiarization with mindfulness and with the problem of experiencing mindful awareness during their daily lives.* Participants needed to be experientially familiar with the problem addressed by this study: the difficulty of experiencing mindful awareness in the midst of normal life at work and at home. Each participant was indeed familiar with the experience of being completely present to the moment, and aware of being present, and–in various ways–each of the co-researchers had given up on the possibility of experiencing mindfulness as an integral component of daily existence.
- *Passion for the subject and the resources to fully participate in the study.* I decided that participants needed to have a vital interest in experiencing mindfulness in their everyday lives, because it was this interest that would carry them through the intensity of the inquiry. They needed to have the time and the inclination to attend two weekend sessions, participate in mid-week conversations, maintain a regular journal, and stay the course for what turned out to be a three-month process. Secondly, they needed to have the financial resources to handle their travel expenses. I anticipated that the benefits they receive from extending mindfulness into their lives would more than

compensate them for this investment of time, energy, and money. All of the participants met these criteria.

- *Access to the internet and facility with word processing and email.* There was a strong online component to the study. We maintained a private web site with Smartgroups.com, at which I posted documents explaining the background and methodology of the inquiry. We also used this site to post and retrieve each other's journal entries and the results of the two scales we used during the course of the study. We used email to arrange the logistics of our meetings, to perform member checks on case study material, and to arrange our conference calls. The online component of the study worked seamlessly and eased the logistical load of our work.
- *A high degree of reflexivity, openness, maturity, integrity, and willingness to share.* Because participants would judge for themselves when they were experiencing mindful awareness, a significant degree of maturity, humility, and self-observation was required. Participants also needed to possess a significant capacity for truthfulness and transparency. All this was critical, because their observations were the primary data by which the subject of the research was to be explored. The participants were extraordinary in this regard: insightful, sensitive to their own process, vulnerable, and honest.
- *People I knew well.* In order to evaluate whether or not a participant met the above criteria, I needed to know them well. The fact that we

had known each other prior to the inquiry was a significant benefit to the research process, for it provided a firm foundation of trust. Interestingly enough, this foundation created an environment of mutual respect and enjoyment which, upon reflection, left my dissertation committee wondering if there had been any conflict, upset, or disagreement that wasn't being addressed. In this case, we just didn't have that dynamic present. In future research projects, where people don't have this sort of background together, such conflict would undoubtedly enter into the picture.

Collection of Data

Outline of the Inquiry

Before I discuss the procedures I used for data collection and data analysis, I want to illuminate the specific data sources by providing an outline of the three-month inquiry process. The code names chosen for themselves by the three co-researchers were: George, Ravi, and Ursula.

- *First weekend.* This was a two-day, residential experience in which participants participated in group sessions regarding: (a) exploration of previous experiences of mindful awareness; (b) instruction regarding using split-attention to link mindful awareness to the six activities of sitting, walking, eating, watching, listening, and riding in a car; and (c) sharing about our experiences together of these activities; (d) sharing the results of the two scales used in the study; and (e) deciding and

arranging the logistics for the following three months of the program. We conducted this weekend in Ravi's home.

- *Four weeks of everyday living.* Ninety per-cent of the course took place in the participants' daily environment. As they immersed themselves in their everyday events at home and at work, they aimed to notice mindful awareness when it occurred, observe its relationship to the basic activities of their day, and take note of its impact on their lives. During these four weeks, all four of us: (a) kept a journal of our daily experiences of mindful awareness, (b) posted the journal each week on our private web site; (c) read each other's journals, and (d) spoke together weekly via a conference call.
- *Second weekend.* During this second weekend, we: (a) shared and compared experiences of the previous four weeks, (b) examined the codes I had developed during the course of initial data analysis and made recommendations about the coding system, (c) shared the results of the second round of scales, and (d) made decisions about the next four weeks of the inquiry. It was at this point that the group shifted the original protocol of the study: effectively extending for two more months the journal keeping and conference calls as a way to keep deepening the experience of generating mindful awareness in our daily lives. We held this weekend in Ursula's home.
- *Eight more weeks of everyday living.* Throughout this period, we continued to keep and post our journals and to conduct weekly

conference calls. Also during this time, I continued the process of data analysis, drafted the case studies, and began the process of conducting member checks of case study material.

- *Closing meeting.* We formally closed our inquiry with a face-to-face meeting in South London at which we shared our experiences since we had last met, exchanged observations about the case study material, and made the decision to indefinitely continue keeping our journals and to sharing together in a bi-weekly conference call. After three months, we were convinced that the mutuality of our relationship was a central factor in the greatly expanded mindfulness we were all experiencing in the midst of everyday life.

Data Collection Procedures

Specific Data Sources

There are four types of data for qualitative research: interviews, observations, and documents, and audiovisual materials (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2002). To create the emergence of an *information-rich* context (Merriam, 2001; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995) in which the experience of everyday mindfulness could be captured and described, I decided to generate multiple sources of data. I collected the following data about each participant, including myself:

- *Conversations from the first and second weekends.* Fifty hours of group conversation were recorded and transcribed.

- *Journal entries.* All participants, including myself kept a regular journal for three months, and participants posted their journals weekly on our web site.
- *Personal observations.* I recorded my observations of the group and of myself throughout the first and second weekends and after our conference calls.
- *Conference calls.* Over six hours of conversation from 12 calls were recorded and transcribed.
- *Project journal.* I kept notes of decisions made and shifts in the project throughout the three months.
- *Photographs.* The original plan included the taking of photographs. However, the need for confidentiality and for maintaining my presence in group discussions led to a group decision to not take photographs.
- *Test results from two psychometric scales.* Although many transpersonal theorists (Wilber, 2001b) convincingly argue that psychometric scales cannot grasp the ineffability of transpersonal experience, some researchers (MacDonald, LeClair, Holland, Alter, & Friedman, 1995) maintain that psychometric tests *can* helpfully describe and track the *expressions and correlates* of transpersonal experience. Integral Inquiry, for example, incorporates quantitative measurements into qualitative research, using quantitative data to "assess the outcomes, consequences, side effects, and other 'fruits' of particular experiences" (Braud, 1998, p. 38) while relying on

qualitative data to provide an understanding of the depth, richness, and complexity of the experiences. After reviewing most of the psychometric scales available for transpersonal research (MacDonald, Friedman, & Kuentzel, 1999a, 1999b), I chose Friedman's SELF-R scale and Howden's SAS scale to use at the first and second weekends of the inquiry. The SELF-R scale, a revision of the original SELF scale, was appropriate for use in this study because of its focus on an individual's self-concept in the midst of the experiences of ordinary daily life. The SAS scale, originally designed for nursing research, focuses on the capacity of people to find meaning and purpose in the experience of ordinary living; this made it especially appropriate for this study. Additionally, what made both scales appropriate for this study was their simplicity and ease of use; they didn't detract from the fundamentally qualitative orientation of the research and offered the possibility of added value as a separate and unique data source. According to Friedman (2003), I required no special training to administer either of these scales and I was to use the raw results in any analysis of the data, since the sample size of four was too small for any meaningful quantitative analysis.

- *Descriptions of the mindful experiences of recognized authorities in the field.* I preserved these from the literature review and used them to discuss the results of our inquiry. They preserved helpful points of comparison with the documented experiences of our group.

Recording and Transcribing

I used a digital recording equipment (Olympus DS-3000, with conference microphone, telephone recording adapter, and transcription foot pedal and software) to create transcripts of all weekend group sessions and conference calls. When my attempts to use a professional transcription service failed, I began to transcribe the material myself. I found this so valuable that I continued to do the transcriptions throughout the entire project. Transcribing the recordings allowed me a unique perspective on the data; I literally experienced our conversations for the second time, with greater insight, and I concluded that doing the transcriptions was central to the process of encountering the data.

Managing Group Conversations

I planned carefully for *entry* and *exit* of the participants (Patton, 2002). I invited people personally, by telephone, to participate in the study. I was completely transparent about the purposes and procedures of the inquiry, my roles as researcher, coach, and co-participant, the costs involved, the criteria for their selection, and the permissions they need to give. Throughout the study, we worked as a group to make decisions affecting the study, we discussed the coding of data and its interpretation, and all of the results were reviewed by each participant who maintained the final approval of content directly related to his or her life.

The strategy during all of these conversations–a strategy which I shared with the co-researchers–was to fully participate in these discussions. Because I had come to the inquiry with eighteen months of experience attempting to apply

split-attention to my daily life experiences, I was careful as we started our first weekend not to share my experiences on a given subject until everyone else had shared theirs. Also, I was careful not to offer my opinions in ways that would preempt their own. Finally, I was careful to ask questions and maintain a spirit and practice of inquiry rather than provide any answers from my own experience. By the time we were halfway through the first weekend, it was obvious that everyone was perfectly willing and able to have their own experience, share it, and regard me as a fellow researcher with his own experiences.

There were several times during the 90-day inquiry period in which progressive focusing (Stake, 1995) was required. One example of this was during the second weekend when I realized that I didn't have a clear picture of what everyday life was like for each participant. I suggested that we devote up to an hour for each person to talk about daily life: before our inquiry began and since its inception. The group decided to do this, and the resulting shares served to significantly deepen our understanding of each other and of the process of generating mindful awareness in daily life.

Encountering the Data

Data Analysis Procedures

Simultaneous Analysis and Collection

Data collection and data analysis should occur *simultaneously* (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 2001; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995). The analysis of the first weekend data began immediately following the completion of the weekend

sessions as I began to transcribe the recordings of the weekend sessions. I completed the transcriptions within a week, and, from that point forward, I transcribed every conference call immediately upon its completion. Within one week of the first weekend, I began to review and code the written material, and I continued simultaneously collecting and analyzing data for the remainder of the inquiry period.

Data Analysis Strategies

There are five strategies for data analysis: *ethnographic*, *narrative*, *phenomenological*, *content analysis/analytic induction,* and *constant comparative* (Merriam, 2001). Here is a definition of each and why the constant comparative strategy was the most appropriate strategy for the study:

- *Ethnographic Analysis*–ethnographic research focuses on culture and society, and researchers focus on a rich, thick description of data, often using categories such as the economy, social demographics, life situations, and the environment. These categories of analysis were not appropriate to the study.
- *Narrative Analysis*–narrative research focuses on the ways in which people experience the world and it gathers and presents data in terms of stories about people and stories told by people. I used the narrative form to present the individual case studies, including liberal use of their own words from conversations and journals, because this form of presentation gave the reader the most immediate and compelling grasp of each participant's experience.

- *Phenomenological Analysis*–because the focus in pure phenomenological research is on examining the essence of experience, bracketing of researcher assumptions and experience is critical to this form of data analysis. This was unsuitable for the study since my personal experience was critical as a lens through which to view and understand the experience of my co-researchers. Furthermore, my focus was on *describing* experience, not analyzing its essence. However, *knowing* my own experience as a co-researcher allowed me to determine when I needed to (a) *bracket* my own experience or (b) *use* my own experience as a lens to understand the experience of others. Furthermore, while analyzing data, I deliberately engaged in periods of incubation as a way of deepening my understanding of each person's experiences during the study.
- *Constant Analysis and Analytic Induction*–both of these forms of analysis are more appropriate to quantitative studies than qualitative. Constant analysis is usually used to apply standardized measurements to units of data, and analytic induction is a process of continually refining hypotheses that guide a study. The study didn't begin with a hypothesis nor did it involve any standardized measurement, even in regard to the two scales that were used.

Constant comparative analysis was originally associated with the research methodology of grounded theory; however, this strategy is compatible with the inductive, concept-building orientation of all qualitative research and this method

of analysis is now used by many researchers who are *not* interested in generating substantive theory (Merriam, 2001). With this in mind, I am comfortable with saying that the general approach to data analysis included the constant comparative method. I was *not* seeking to develop theory, but I *was* open to whatever conclusions, inferences, and models of understanding emerged from the data.

In analyzing data, it is critical to keep in mind that *case study is not general qualitative research* and that the purpose of the analysis is to *understand the case.* Qualitative analysis rarely stops at its most basic level–a simple narrative description–because descriptions are easily misinterpreted by those who read them. Researchers often take the analysis to one or both of the next two levels: (a) category construction and (b) theory development (Merriam, 2001; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995).

Specific Analysis Procedures

To develop an analytic approach, I reviewed the following: Tesch's 8 steps (in Creswell, 2003), Bogdan and Biklan's 10 steps (in Merriam, 2001), and the specific procedures put forward by Stake (1995), Merriam (2001), and Patton (2002). Prior to beginning analysis, I used their insights to develop the following procedure for analyzing the data:

1. Go through the first document that is generated: reading it carefully, pondering what I see, writing observations, interpretations, and questions in the margins. Also, I will write memos to myself about any notions that are inspired by this *conversation* with the document.

2. Gather the marginal notes into groups that seem to go together, and assign a tentative category name to each group.

3. Repeat these two steps with another document, and then merge the groups from each document into one group of categories, all the while refining their labels.

4. Continue this process with each succeeding document, applying the categories I've created to code the data and noticing the emergence of new categories as they appear. I will make sure that the categories reflect the purpose of the research, are mutually exclusive yet inherently congruent, and appear to include most of the data.

5. Remember that meaning can be found either through *category aggregation* (building understanding by gathering multiple instances) or *direct interpretation* (discovering understanding by pondering a single instance).

6. Remember that it is neither possible nor necessary to describe or understand *all* of the data. The point is to *understand the case*.

7. When all of the data has been examined in this way, and I have read over the data several times to get a picture of the whole, examine the categories to see if any *central* categories emerge and determine if there are any *linking* of categories that reveal patterns, conclusions, visual models or explanations that are helpful in describing what happens when people link mindful awareness to daily activities.

8. Keep reading and relating to the data. Let intuition have its way, and remember that the smallest, most solitary piece of data can trigger the most profound learning.

9. Insert at several points in this process periods of incubation followed by a variety of ways to access the understanding that has developed during these periods (Moustakas, 1990).

I followed this procedure carefully, and it was a revealing and rewarding experience. Over a period of weeks, my understanding of each person's experience–of each *case*–deepened and grew. At times, I would wake up in the middle of the night having suddenly understood something that had been eluding me for days. There was a sense of magic in this process, leaps of intuition that transcended logic, and yet a sense of steady, increasing awareness about what it was like for this group of people to find more mindfulness in their day-to-day activities.

Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software

Many researchers acknowledge the helpful role that computer software can play in coding and retrieving large amounts of textual data; (Fielding and Lee, 1998; Gibbs, 2002; Merriam, 2001; Patton, 2002; Weitzman, 2000). In addition to coding and retrieval, high-end qualitative research software programs support the linking of categories to draw inferences, build visual models, and develop theory (Scolari, 2002).

After reviewing this material (including analyses of the limitations of using this software–see below), I decided to use QSR's NVivo Qualitative Research Software (version 2.0). It provided (a) significant flexibility in the assigning, merging, and renaming of categories; (b) the capacity to process extremely large amounts of data; (c) the capacity to retrieve not just coded data segments, but the context in which they occurred; and (d) visual model-building tools to link categories, draw inferences, and discover explanations (Bazeley & Richards, 2000).

There are inherent limits when using qualitative research software (Fielding and Lee, 1988; Gibbs, 2002; Merriam, 2001; Patton, 2002; Weitzman, 2000). Here is a list of those limits and my responses to the problems they posed:

- *Software can shape the researcher's choice of methods.* I selected the research method before I fully investigated the capacity of the software package.
- *Using software may distance the researcher from the data.* While this particular software package contains the ability to present data segments within the context of the paragraphs surrounding them, this is a limitation of computer software. At the beginning of the project, I was willing to create printed copies of the data if I needed them to be close to the material. As it turned out, doing the transcriptions of the data put me very much *inside* the material, and all I really needed to print out to get a greater perspective was the list of codes. Also, I found that the NVivo software's capability of instantly searching for

and retrieving not only sentence fragments, but the paragraphs and sections surrounding them, provided the perspective of seeing the material contextually as well as intimately.

- *The researcher may limit his analytical options due to the limits of the software.* I decided upon the analytical process before exploring how the software could assist me in the management of such a large amount of data. In fact, I never used the full extent of this software's capability.
- *Computers can store so much data that the researcher can start believing he has to deal with all of it.* This can be a real problem. A related problem is that the computer does such a good job of gathering data segments into categories, that it can prejudice the researcher to category aggregation over direct interpretation (Stake, 1995). If the researcher lets this happen, the researcher loses half of his interpretative capacity. I countered this systemic bias by not collapsing categories into each other simply because they had a small amount of data associated with them. Instead, I maintained categories that met two criteria: (a) they were heuristic (they revealed understanding and they compelled the reader to look beyond them) and (b) they were the smallest unit of understanding that could stand on their own (Merriam, 2001). When a category met those criteria, I kept it, even if it had only one data segment attached to it. Often, these

single-segment categories represented a minority point of view that was vital to understanding the case it involved.

Validity

In qualitative research, matters of validity and reliability are understood as a concern for trustworthiness, authenticity, reflexivity, praxis, enhanced understanding, and the integrity and ethics of the researcher (Creswell, 2003; Gergen & Gergen, 2000; Merriam, 2001; Patton, 2002).

Internal Validity

Internal validity is concerned with how well research findings match reality (Merriam, 2001). Given the participatory paradigm that provides the framework for this study, the internal validity of this study depended on how fully I appreciated and understood the perspective of the participants. There are several methods of making sure that the researcher's interpretation of data matches the constructed meanings of the participants (Merriam, 2001; Patton 2002). I used the following methods:

- *Multiple data sources.* I used seven sources of data which provided various lenses through which to understand our experience.
- *Repeated observations.* I was with the participants for seven of the 90 days of the study, and I spoke to them weekly and corresponded as needed by email during all 13 weeks of the inquiry period.
- *Member checks.* Throughout the inquiry period, and during the writing of this dissertation, I shared the analysis of the data with the

co-researchers: the various permutations of the coding lists, the individual case studies, and the themes and insights that emerged during the process of analysis. Each participant retained the final approval over any material directly relating to their experience, and the significant periods of time we devoted to reflecting upon our experiences contributed significantly to the accuracy and depth of the data analysis and presentation of findings.

- *Peer review.* Cohort-member Matt Taylor and I agreed to serve as peer review partners for our respective doctoral studies. Mr. Taylor reviewed the procedures and this material throughout all stages of the inquiry.
- *Awareness of researcher assumptions.* By experiencing the process as a co-researcher–keeping and posting a journal, participating fully in all discussions–I increased my capacity for self-observation and reflexivity.

Reliability

Reliability concerns the degree to which the study can be replicated by others (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, (2001). The complexity and variance of human behavior mitigates against the replication of *any* qualitative study. In *quantitative* research, the concept of reliability is based on a positivist paradigm that maintains the following perspective: an objective reality exists, it can be apprehended by more than one person, and repeated study of it will yield similar results over time. This causal belief system doesn't fit within the participative paradigm of this

study. However, when the notion of reliability is reframed for qualitative research, reliability shifts its focus of concern from (a) whether the results can be replicated to (b) whether the results are *consistent with the data collected* (Merriam, 2001).

To insure that the findings were consistent with the data I collect, I provided the following, about which I have already commented in detail:

- *Transparency.* I openly revealed all purposes, procedures, and results.
- *Peer review.* I undertook this throughout the entire study.
- *Systematic documentation of the dissertation process.* I began a dissertation journal two years ago, and I maintained it throughout the project.
- *Member checks*. Participants reviewed and approved all data and findings.

External Validity

External validity is concerned with how well the findings of a study can be applied to other situations. Qualitative researchers take a variety of positions with regard to the fact that external validity, as it is understood in traditional research, simply cannot be directly applied to qualitative inquiry. The paradigmatic conflict that exists in determining reliability also exists for external validity (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 2001).

There are four different responses of qualitative researchers to this problem (Merriam, 2001). I will mention two of these responses that make sense to me: (a) to regard generalizations as *working hypotheses*, not conclusions; and

(b) to regard generalization *as taking place in the life and situation of the readers or users of the study*. The degree to which readers can apply the findings of a study to their lives is the degree to which the study is externally valid. This second meaning is a high standard when applied to this study on everyday mindfulness. I would like to think, however, that readers who match the criteria of participants for this study will be able to apply these findings to their everyday lives.

To support these understandings of external validity, I will concentrate on the following elements that support external validation (Merriam, 2001):

- *Rich, thick description.* I have documented as fully as I can the participant's experiences of everyday mindfulness, and I have presented them from a variety of viewpoints, in the hope that this gives readers a greater chance of recognizing themselves and their circumstances in the findings.
- *Typicality.* Throughout the inquiry, we compared the experiences of one participant with another, and I also compared our experiences with those people who are recognized authorities in the field of mindfulness. I hoped that this would facilitate readers making comparisons with their own experience.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

There were no external, objective criteria for determining when people were experiencing mindfulness. When Hirai (1978, 1989) wired Zen monks to EKG machines in an attempt to discover which brain patterns predominated when they were in a mindful state of awareness, he used the abbot of the Zen Monastery to evaluate when monks were in a mindful state. In this study, it was left to participants to determine for themselves when they were experiencing mindfulness. Although it was the experience of all participants that we shared a common sense of when we were experiencing mindful awareness together, and when we weren't, this necessary subjectivity opened the door to the possibility of self-deception or outright fakery when it cam to someone's self-determination of their state. The study limited the possibility of deception (intended or unintended) by (a) adopting Tart's (1990) description of mindfulness as authoritative; (b) encouraging all participants to offer their feedback to others during the group sessions; (c) selecting participants for the study whose integrity, capacity for self-observation, and honesty were known to me; and (d) developing and maintaining an atmosphere of mutual support, exploration, and learning–as opposed to an atmosphere of competition, achievement, and punishment/reward.

Participants spent 95% percent of the inquiry period in the midst of their normal, daily lives–living with their families, friends, and colleagues at work. This meant that, as a group, we were not present to observe each other's experience, provide feedback, and share about our progress and struggles. The

study addressed this limitation by requiring participants to (a) maintain and post online a regular journal, (b) participate in a weekly conference call, and (c) participate in 70 hours of group discussion.

The fact that I played multiple roles in the study–participant, initial instructor, and participant–provided a limitation regarding my subjectivity. On the one hand I was positioned exactly where a qualitative researcher needs to be, as the *chief research instrument* of the study (Patton, 2002). On the other, these multiple roles created the possibility of emotional and intellectual bias: as *instructor*, I wanted what was offering to be effective; as *participant*, I was required to be transparent about my failings and successes; and, as *researcher,* I needed to sustain my curiosity and integrity. I addressed this design weakness by: (a) participating fully in the program–keeping a journal, receiving support and insight from the co-researchers, reaching for my own, truthful experience of this practice in the context of the program as distinct from how I'd experienced it before; (b) selecting participants who regarded me as a peer with whom they could be straightforward and honest, as opposed to telling me what they thought I wanted to hear; (c) adopting guidelines to govern my behavior and attitude during group sessions; (d) limiting my role as instructor to the initial period of the first weekend session, in which I explained the practice of split-attention; and (e) being fully transparent when assuming the role of researcher, including requiring the group to make decisions about the research experience and abiding by those decisions.

Delimitations

The participants were already familiar with the experience of mindfulness. Therefore, the study's results could not be generalized to people completely unfamiliar with the experience of mindfulness.

The program was 90 days in length. The study did not demonstrate any results beyond this period of time.

The study was conducted with a small group of four people, in order to allow for depth and richness of description of the experience of everyday mindfulness. There was limited diversity with regard to age, gender, culture, and educational background, and no diversity with regard to race. This limited the conclusions that could be drawn from the study with regard to people whose background, daily circumstances, or cultural heritage differed significantly from the group engaged in the program.

Reflections on the Research Process

I need more time and distance from the past three years in order to see clearly what this doctoral journey has meant to my life. It has been a rich period of time, and, looking back, the memories swim and refuse to drop into understandable categories. I do see a four patterns emerging that may serve as the beginnings of a process of reflection that will continue for some time to come.

First, I sense in my heart and mind a definite movement from cynicism to hope. I entered this doctoral program after decades of involvement in "my own thing:" a program of self-development which I had co-founded and exclusively

worked within. I possessed a self-righteousness about my point of view that was grounded in an anxiety that what was valuable for my own life was ultimately of little value for others. Within my own circle of colleagues and students, I was confident and a recognized leader. Outside of that circle, I was often heavy-footed: clumsy and frustrated in articulating my ideas when they were met with resistance and inwardly inflexible when it came to appreciating the ideas advocated by others. During the past three years, I have paradoxically become more convinced of the value of my ideas for others *and* the value of their ideas for me. I have moved outside my own organization–professionally and attitudinally–and this movement has given me greater perspective on the program I co-founded and of which I am proud, and it has also given me greater ability to use and benefit from the programs that other thinkers leaders have developed. As a result, my cynicism has disappeared, and I feel ultimately hopeful about the transformational movements I see at work in our world.

I also observe in myself a shift from isolation to engagement. Professionally, my new role as independent consultant, executive coach, and mediator has thrust me into a wider arena in life and required me to offer who I am and what I know to people who are not part of the narrow world I used to inhabit almost exclusively. I have been surprised and gratified at (a) how much I've been appreciated and (b) how much *I* appreciate and admire what others are doing. I am seeing the possibility of offering this capacity for everyday mindfulness in a way that is widespread and effective, and I now have the confidence to do so.

Finally, I believe that I have changed in the way that I learn: I have supplemented a strong intuitive grasp of important things with a capacity for academic rigor and sound methodology. I believe I have moved from being a talented amateur to a grounded professional who genuinely values inquiry, multiplicity of perspective, and flexibility in apprehending and applying what is learned. I find myself with a greater trust in the capacity and desire of human beings to learn and in my ability to connect with them in a way that is mutual, respectful, and filled with learning for all involved. I trust qualitative inquiry and I trust being a co-researcher. It's like coming home, and I am eager to do more.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

The results of the study are presented in four sections. *Overview of the Inquiry Experience* presents a brief description of the group's experience during the three months of the inquiry. *Case Studies* includes a narrative description of each co-researcher's experience, using their actual words as much as possible. *Learnings from Case Studies* explores our experience of mindful awareness, the benefits we derived, what we learned about creating the conditions for mindful awareness in everyday life, and the particular themes that emerged during the inquiry. *Discussion* addresses the results of the inquiry in relationship to the literature of the field.

Overview of the Inquiry Experience

First Weekend

We gathered at Ravi's home and walked to a nearby restaurant for dinner. Over the meal, we shared our thoughts and feelings about being together, and we discussed qualitative research in general and the elements of this inquiry in particular. On Saturday morning, we discussed our individual reasons for participating in the project, we clarified my roles, and I assumed and then completed the instructor's role by providing some simple information about the practice of split-attention. The three co-researchers each took responsibility for teaching the group to apply split-attention to two specific everyday activities, and,

during the next hour, while I wrote observations of our process, the three of them experimented with split-attention and prepared to instruct the group in its practice. Ursula had said that she would rather explore applying split-attention to *keyboarding* (on a laptop computer) instead of *sitting*, and we decided to shift the original plan of the study to allow for this. After an hour's break, George guided us through an experience of utilizing split-attention to while *riding in a car*, and Ravi did the same with regard to *tasting* food.

Over lunch, we discussed the morning's activities and shared more about past experiences of mindful awareness. On the way home from the pub, Ursula provided instruction about applying split-attention to *walking*. That afternoon, George took the group through an exercise of using split-attention with *seeing.* After a break for a nap and for tea, Ravi guided us through an experience of exercising split-attention when *listening,* and then we walked to a nearby restaurant for dinner. Over dinner, we discussed and agreed upon the procedures for keeping a journal during the next four weeks and posting it online.

We began with breakfast on Sunday morning, discussed our experiences of mindful awareness the previous day, and expanded our conversation to include more of the circumstances of our daily lives and how greater mindfulness might play a helpful part. We had some memorable moments of *waking up* together as we spoke, and we described these experiences as they occurred, sharing as well the memories that these experiences stimulated. In the latter part of the morning, Ursula guided us through applying split-attention to the activity of *typing on our laptop computers.*

We conducted our final session over an extended lunch. We discussed our experience of the two psychometric scales. Even though none of us found the experience particularly illuminating we agreed to fill them out again before our second weekend and see if there was any revealing change in our answers. We reviewed the weekend, reflected in depth regarding the next phase of the inquiry, and decided to substitute weekly conference calls for the individual coaching calls originally planned for this phase. We decided that this strategy more fully reflected the atmosphere of mutual support and sharing we had developed during the weekend. We discussed the plan for transcribing the recordings of our sessions, the development of coding schemes and their use in analyzing the data, and we agreed that I would bring to the second weekend the list of codes that I had developed to that point, so that we could use them to reflect on our experience.

We spent the entire weekend together, speaking as truthfully as we could about the experiences we were having. We shared the details of what mindful awareness was like as we experienced it, comparing our experiences and discussing our insights about them. Although we had known each other for years, enjoyed each other's company, and experienced no conflict during our time together, we did have our individual preferences and sensitivities when it came to experiencing mindful awareness. Ravi, Ursula, and myself gravitated toward the experience of walking as a primary activity in which we awakened more often into mindfulness. George was especially attuned to sights and sounds. Ursula seemed to "hear in colors" when she was being mindful, Ravi often became

mindful when eating or drinking. George and I found the motion of the car especially conducive to mindful awareness. Discovering these differences and exploring the mindful experiences we held in common provided hours of conversation during this first weekend. Our commitment to honesty, respect of individual differences, and our willingness to listen to each other–including our willingness to sit together in silence when words wouldn't come–generated a powerful and sustaining context for our inquiry.

Four Weeks of Everyday Living

During the next four weeks, we kept journals, posted them online for each other to read, and we conducted the weekly conference calls. We noticed a significant increase in our experiences of *waking up* spontaneously during our everyday lives. We aimed to describe these experiences, notice when they happened and when they didn't, and document their impact on our feelings, our thoughts, our bodies, and our awareness.

In the third week, *all* of us started encountering difficult emotions: fear, anger, irritation, anxiety. George visited the hospital with chest pains, Ravi and I struggled with professional issues, and Ursula was faced with critical feedback from colleagues at her children's school. These experiences created a rich and revealing learning environment. Throughout this time, we repeatedly affirmed the value of our weekly phone conversations; Ravi recalled Tart's (1994)experience with teaching mindfulness and referred to our conversations as a weekly "ringing of the bell" in which we all were reminded of the value of what we were doing and encouraged to continue in its practice.

Second Weekend

We traveled to Ursula's home and began our conversation over dinner at a nearby pub. It was a heartfelt reunion, and, during that first evening, we shared many stories about the previous four weeks. On Saturday morning, over a breakfast of smoked salmon and scrambled eggs provided by George, we discussed how to make this experience available for others. We spent our day discussing each of our lives in detail and following the threads that emerged. We lunched at another nearby pub, took a break for a nap and for tea, and we concluded our discussion over dinner.

All of us returned the next morning dissatisfied with the previous day's experience. Our reflection revealed that, at times, we had lost our way in *discussing* mindful awareness instead of *experiencing* it together. I shared my observation that we didn't really have a clear picture of each other's daily lives prior to the inquiry, and we agreed to take the time for each person to describe daily life prior to the inquiry, notice shifts in capacity to be mindful, and describe the impact of that mindfulness at home and at work. This decision fundamentally shifted the quality of our experience and expanded our understanding of mindful awareness, and it required George to remind us of that commitment later on that same day when, once again, we drifted into sharing our insights about mindful living instead of continuing to experience it. This was the most difficult and challenging element of this weekend. That evening, we asked Ursula to share some of her songs, and we spent time singing folk songs over a glass of wine. On Sunday, we continued sharing about our individual lives, we discussed at length

the support we needed to expand our experience of everyday mindfulness, and we decided to extend the original parameters of the inquiry. Instead of the original plan–which would have concluded the inquiry at this point and followed it up with individual interviews after 30 days–we continued the inquiry for 60 days, including weekly journaling and conference calls, and completing with a half-day meeting.

Eight Weeks of Everyday Living

During this extended period, we found ourselves applying split-attention to more and varied activities in our daily lives. We deepened our understanding of the impact of mindful awareness on our work, and we documented the mental, emotional, and physical benefits we noticed from this increased mindfulness. We shared our struggles and our breakthroughs, and discussed the many themes that emerged from the experience: how mindful awareness delivered us to reality; how reality itself, no matter how difficult, seemed to nurture us and *call* us to a sense of being awake and aware; how even a little more mindfulness each day seemed to have a great impact; and how much patience and self-forgiveness was required to pursue this experience.

During this time, the experience of talking together once a week increased in value for each of us. Ursula described it as "the biggest and most helpful thing." Additionally, we discovered that the individual differences we had observed in the first weekend together–i.e., that we each tended to *wake up* into mindful awareness with certain activities more than others–generally remained and grew stronger.

- Ravi still found himself waking up often when he was outdoors, walking through the country, birdwatching, and also when he was eating. He still found that when he was working–doing research in his office or meeting with clients–hours would often pass when he wouldn't wake up. Also, when he was in the midst of a family emergency, he went several days without waking up at all until, in the middle of one of our group telephone calls, he realized what had happened.
- George still found himself aware of being mindful when first awakening in the morning. He had started taking more breaks during his workday, taking walks, and looking out the window at the countryside surrounding his home. He noticed that "when I deal with a pile of post, I often don't wake up at all," but he did find that, while he was listening to clients, he was returning to mindfulness more often. Also, when he was reaching to tell the truth to himself or to others, he would return to being mindful.
- Ursula found that "walking and driving is the best for me; I often come home to myself when I'm doing these things." Interestingly–given that Ursula was the one who led us in practicing split-attention on the computer keyboard during the first weekend–she now found that "I hardly ever wake up when I'm at the computer!"
- I found myself continuing to wake up often when I walked, even from one room to the next. Also, when riding in a car or engaged in any

sort of motion. Additionally, I found myself returning to mindfulness far more often when I was working as a trainer, especially when I was listening to people in a course setting or over the phone when coaching. However, when at my desk, unless I was writing something that required me to reach for a deeper level of truthfulness, I would often find time passing between moments of waking up.

Closing Meeting

Our final meeting was held in Blackheath, a large, grassy expanse of land in South London, on the edge of which sits an old stone church, and under which lie the bodies of thousands of people who died in the Black Plague. During our conversation there was a palpable sense of gentleness, richness, and depth. We discussed the themes that had emerged from our shared experiences of the previous two months. The three co-researchers provided feedback on their case study drafts I had written, and I talked about the elements of my own case study which was not yet in written form. We looked forward to the immediate future and discussed what each of us wanted to explore next with regard to everyday mindfulness. Especially since we were all finding *many* more moments of spontaneously waking up during our day-to-day lives, we were keen to focus on using split-attention to *extend* these moments as they occurred. Ursula concluded our inquiry by singing, "Stay Awake," a song she had written during the 90 days of our inquiry.

We decided that the mutuality of our companionship was a necessary ingredient of expanding our capacity for everyday mindful awareness, and we

committed to continuing to share our experiences through journaling and a bi-weekly conference call.

Case Studies

One of the advantages of having recorded and transcribed all of our meetings and conference calls is that the actual words of each co-researcher are available to capture the uniqueness and the immediacy of that co-researcher's experience. In all four of the case studies presented below, words within quotation marks are the words of the participants themselves, either recorded and transcribed or included in their journals. I have added italics to some words to reflect any special emphasis or unusual tonality that I heard when transcribing the recordings. The three co-researchers chose pseudonyms for themselves and approved the text of their case studies, within which certain personal details were altered to protect their confidentiality while maintaining the integrity and accuracy of the description of their experience.

Ravi

Ravi's Experience of Everyday Life

This 60 year-old organizational consultant attended university at Oxford and received additional training at the London School of Economics. His work had taken him to 45 countries over the past 20 years. After a "brief flirtation with fundamentalist Christianity as a teenager," he had been "a lifelong agnostic with a long interest in spirituality, extended by my years associated with the Life Training." Ravi was interested in this study, because, although "mindfulness was

not a concept I had really thought about much, I realized it had been a feature of various things I had worked on over the years. He had a keen interest in doing something that would put him more in touch with the experience of "being in the present moment." He had been through such experiences in brief ways on a regular basis, and, infrequently, in an extended fashion.

> Over the years, I have been aware of having experiences of something I now realize is mindfulness. Tasting chocolate and bird watching are examples. I have had a sense, sometimes, of an experience somehow akin to meditation, but not *away* [from daily life], rather *in the world, here and now*.
>
> One that comes to mind was on a weekend workshop . . . on the coast, some years ago. One exercise was to choose a place and sit there, doing nothing, for three hours! I chose a wonderful large flat rock, surrounded by trees. I can see it now. Much of the time turned into a sort of meditation on the beauty and the detail of the place itself. The colors in that rock. The breeze in the trees. Insects moving around.
>
> I was totally "into" that place. It became quite deep, the experience of it . . . Very calm. Very alive. The blood flowing well; the breath slow, easy and regular, very audible. But also "out" –the eyes and nose and ears taking everything in.

He had read Tart's books on mindfulness (1986, 1994), but his dislike for the recommended exercises interfered with his appreciation of Tart's suggestions about the possibilities of extending mindful awareness into his everyday life. He "allowed this to deflect my attention away from the basic idea of mindfulness, and also the idea of split-attention," and, as a result, split-attention "became one of the many self-improvement techniques that I learned about, and then it got filed away, unused."

He was familiar with several Buddhist books on meditation, but they seemed "procedural and cold" in the extreme. Interestingly, his most consistent experience of being fully present was found in his regular enjoyment of chocolate

in the evenings, a ritual which he described in elaborate and delightful detail: purchasing Tesco's 72% chocolate–to his palette, the very best available; dividing the chocolate bar into numerous bite-sized pieces which he carefully stored in a plastic bag; each evening, after dinner, retiring alone to a favorite place in his home, where he would take just one piece of chocolate, "separating it from its friends," and then taking several minutes to fully concentrate on the experience of eating and fully enjoying that one morsel of chocolate. From this experience he had developed a motto for guiding his diet: "maximum enjoyment per calorie." In this experience, and during bird-watching walks in the countryside near his home in southern England, Ravi experienced a total attention to the present moment. He recognized these experiences as being related to mindful awareness, although he realized that they lacked the element of *being aware of* being aware.

At this point in his life, Ravi was an accomplished political consultant, working with leading figures of government in developing countries, including parts of his native India. He viewed his life as a "sort of frighteningly open palette," in that, while he had enough money that he didn't have to work, he wanted to keep contributing to his field, and, due to shifting global economic conditions, fewer jobs were coming his way. This wasn't causing him any particular anxiety, and as a self-described "person of habit," he spent the weekdays, from 8:30 until 5:00, at his desk in his home office, actively managing his investments and staying in touch with clients. He spent his evenings with his wife, with whom he took several leisure trips each year. His extended family, which included his grown children, often gathered for holidays.

Ravi described himself as highly analytical, well-trained in thinking things through, but with a tendency to ignore his feelings and drive himself into busy-ness, becoming overly-absorbed in whatever he was doing.

> When I'm on the computer . . . and [my wife] walks into the room and says–Did you remember such and so?–she can walk out again, and I'll . . . have no idea about what she said!

This capacity to concentrate deeply–and exclude other things from his awareness–served him well in his role as a political consultant where, ironically, he was paid to see things that others failed to see because they were immersed in activity. However, his understanding of the consultant's role demanded a lot of himself.

> As a consultant . . . the only thing you bring to it is [a] total focus that . . . other people can't allow themselves–they're doing several things at once, and, really, your worth is because you don't do anything else . . . you bring a freshness to it, and that's what I do, and I love it.

Years of such focus had left him feeling "rather isolated" from others around him, and somewhat at a loss when events in his life forcibly ripped him from his comfortable isolation to deal with the present moment:

> Some people are very good in crisis . . . I'm the opposite, I'm hopeless. Fairly recently, the radiator burst, and water was going everywhere, and you must ask [my wife] about it. I was going around like a headless chicken. I was trying to put my hand on it, and realizing it was too hot, and thinking–Well, that didn't work!

Ravi also brought to the inquiry a strong, yet self-effacing, sense of humanitarianism. In his younger days, he actively experimented with "living off the land," working communally with others to handle the basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing, including one ill-fated enterprise of creating soap from

goat's milk. Now a fully-fledged "member of the system," self-employed for 35 years and known in international political circles for his expertise, he still retained a sense of serving the interests of sustainability, although he adamantly distanced himself from any notion of being a "do-gooder," claiming instead that he helped others because of what he got for himself from that experience.

> There's something individually profoundly satisfying about [my] work...as a consultant . . . I got into this work where I was dealing with countries and people and livelihoods, poverty, and development, and it was just so . . . profoundly satisfying . . . I am resistant to the idea of . . . doing it because I want to *do good*. I have discovered that doing things like this which have positive benefits for large numbers of people is something that satisfies me profoundly, and I'm very grateful that I have an opportunity to do it and to make a livelihood out of it . . . If people start claiming, *I'm doing this for others*, I get very, very nervous as to what they're about. I'm doing this for *me*.

Ravi's Experience During the Inquiry

When Ravi first started practicing splitting his attention during our first weekend together, he found that it was much easier in some activities than in others. When George led us through an exercise of looking at objects in the room, while paying attention to our breathing, Ravi found himself seeing shapes in a new way: watching the drops of water on the inside of a glass brought a sense of expanded awareness that, using a musical metaphor, he described as "augmented attention . . . hearing the chord, not just the top note." When Ursula guided us through an experience of mindful walking by a river, Ravi felt a sense of freshness and alertness that he likened to "waking up . . . like when you have a nap." However, when George took us for a drive, to practice being aware while riding in a car, Ravi found it nearly impossible to be mindful: he kept thinking about the many familiar sights and sounds (we held that first weekend in his

home) –what they meant, how he'd been there before–and this incessant thinking crowded out any mindful awareness. Also, when he was working, Ravi found that most of the time he didn't even think about the possibility of being mindfully aware.

During the next 30 days, Ravi noticed that being awake in the moment was often an experience of increased intensity. One November day, he climbed a ladder just to see if there were any grapes left at the top of a vine in a sheltered place over his garage. He was completely in the moment, feeling his hands and feet on the ladder as he climbed, and he experienced a child-like delight at finding the last grapes of the season:

> How I tasted those three grapes! I can't remember ever having tasted grapes with such attention, such intensity of sensation. The sweetness, the strawberry-ness, the pips with their sudden bitterness, the skin with its sudden tannin . . . and the very *last* of the three–that was *extra* intense . . . I was aware of my breathing, and of my sounds of delight!

Ravi began taking more walks, finding that his experience of awareness while walking generated a sense of effortlessness, a greater awareness of what was happening around him, and greater insight into how different elements of his experience worked together without his having to control or orchestrate it happening:

> Well, it's like you know, when you try to do something challenging like skiing, when everything comes together, and it works, and it flows effortlessly, it's a remarkable experience. It's like music, when the improvisation flows, you don't put more effort into it to make it better . . . [there's] that sense that, at a certain moment, things move over to another level, that they go by themselves without you, and it's like . . . when you ride a bike, there's a moment when it becomes automatic. You stay up without knowing how you do it. And . . . skiing . . . going down the

> glacier, and doing the curves, and..they almost work by themselves, a rhythm comes.

Ravi's capacity to be mindfully aware greatly increased during the inquiry, and this allowed him to pay attention to and trust more of what happened in his life. During the first couple of weeks, he experienced a lot of delight, relaxation, and refreshment in the experience of "returning to myself"–he would "wake up" and "be a witness" to himself doing things in his everyday life. The more he experienced being awake, the more he wanted this experience, and he welcomed it when it arrived, describing it as "punctuating the day." His conclusion about such moments was, "I find that useful and want to get more of that going."

His willingness to be open to and aware of the totality of his daily life led to a surprising experience in the third week of the inquiry: the eruption of painful feelings, specifically fear, anger, and loneliness.

> I realized that I had thought of [mindfulness] as a pleasurable state, associated with expansion, awareness, and the taste of chocolate. [Now] I see that coming into the present is about acknowledging *all* that there is in the present–events and feelings, many of which will be unpalatable, especially if they are not confronted, challenged and verified. The sense or meaning of existence must therefore be continually challenged, and nothing taken for granted. The choices made in a mindless state, in a state of reaction must be damaging . . . reality demands a real and authentic response . . . rather than a habitual reaction.

Mindful awareness–which first had brought relaxation and a sense of refreshment–now revealed to Ravi how disappointed he was in a current reduction of professional opportunities to consult with political figures: even though he didn't need to earn more money, he realized that he *wanted* to keep working and

he was frightened about the prospect of not being able to do so. Additionally, Ravi realized that he was irritated at certain people for whom he cared but who were doing things he didn't like. Also, Ravi became aware that he was "rather isolated," that this was deeply unsatisfying, and that he longed to involve others in his life in new ways.

With an increasing trust in his experience of mindful awareness, even when it brought him face-to-face with these unpleasant feelings, Ravi started applying split-attention to the moments in which these feelings arose. He would consciously divide his attention between what was happening and the feel of his breath going in and out of his body, or he would pay attention to something he was hearing or seeing. Sometimes, he applied a technique he had learned at a vision workshop of not letting his gaze fixate on any particular object, or he would feel his feet on the ground or his body in a chair. He would do one of these things while he was feeling the painful emotions. He discovered that this practice seemed to intensify the feeling and then allow it to dissipate.

> To become mindful in that moment is painful . . . I've got to *face* . . . what I'm feeling, instead of just staying mindless and be wrapped up in whatever else I'm doing. So there's a certain kind of courage and faith required . . . what did happen after a couple of days was the [feeling] lifted, and I had a sense of having walked my way through it somehow.

As the intensity of the negative feelings diminished, a sense of "knowing exactly what I wanted to do" arose. This experience repeated itself on many occasions, and it resulted in new behavior regarding his work, his relationship with other people, and his capacity to face difficult situations.

> I [decided to be] proactive about the consulting work . . . rather than [continue] the fatalistic [thinking] . . . It's happened before and I can do things about, it and I actually *want* to. I *want* to make the best of it, and, if it comes out that there's nothing there, then so be it, I'll have done my best. But not to let it go by default.
>
> I went to an event . . . last night, and I knew one person. And often, when that happens to me, I'll sort of retreat into a shell . . . (laughter) . . . or just focus on the one person I know, and that's it. And I didn't do that yesterday . . . I had a couple of lovely conversations, and I could really sense myself being mindful in the conversations, and *really savoring them* . . . really listening to what they had to say and asking them questions about their lives.
>
> At the moment, I'm confronting something which is uncomfortable . . . which I've been avoiding for a long time. [Being mindfully aware] has helped me to realize that this is the way to do it, to *go with* the discomfort. I can see terrific benefits in sort of a bleak way . . . I'm facing something I've been avoiding for month. I can breathe into the discomfort, get through it, do the work necessary to get beyond it, and I'm getting somewhere.

Ravi identified other beneficial outcomes during the 90-day inquiry. It was particularly significant for him that he *slowed down.*

> The one thing that is common to all my experiences is the slowing down, it's nearly always there . . . I'm so susceptible . . . to speeding up and thinking about the next thing to be done, and trying to do three things at once . . . particularly around work . . . I notice that there's a lot of activity or multi-tasking going on, and I'm much better at saying, *Hold on, I don't like this*.
>
> I noticed today how I am slowing down, and accepting [my grandson's] pace much more than previously. I used to rush him more.
>
> I am noticing that being *easier about things* seems to result in me being less tired out at the end of the day. Nice!

Ravi also experienced a much greater ability to *experience and learn from his real response to the daily events of his life:*

> In the past . . . I would explode. This is an opportunity to try something different, and I'm much preferring it: step aside, use split-attention, and see where it leads. Terrific benefits in doing that way.

> Today is the anniversary of the death of our dog [who] was with us for thirteen years . . . she was killed in a road accident, and every year we go and put a little ribbon on the lamppost on the corner where she was killed . . . I don't often allow myself tears and sadness in public places, and this was a very public place . . . I think that's what [mindful awareness] has done for me: if it is so that I'm feeling really sad, then I'm feeling really sad and that's really where I am, and that's it.
>
> I made the classic mistake that I think others have made, [i.e.] linking mindfulness with positive experiences: savoring, delicious, all that. And what I learned . . . is . . . that [mindful awareness] actually puts you in touch with what is *real* within you, and if what is real within you is that there's a pain, a sadness, a hurt–whatever it is–then you're in touch with *that* . . . As someone who's become very adept at pushing down [my feelings] and denying them . . . this is a *major* benefit.

Ravi's growing sense of ease and willingness to feel the emotions that were present in a given moment resulted in a greater awareness of his own strength and ability to handle whatever happened–a sense of there being *enough of me to face whatever life brings*.

> It's . . . like there's a balance, a middle of the road, which is the mindfulness, where you are doing what you want to do . . . and there's *enough* of you there. If you're completely withdrawing into yourself, and what's going on is that you're thinking, [or] you're doing something so intensely at the other end that you're absorbed into it, then there's nothing there–there's no availability for whatever might happen next . . . either way, you're not in the present. But in the *middle*, somehow you are, [and you're] in tune with what life may be throwing at you in the next moment. For me, mindfulness is being *attuned* to what might come up next.
>
> I am facing up to painful past failings. I have avoided this for some time. My management of our finances was good during the bull market. When the market went sour, my tendency to avoidance and denial got in the way. I can now face that painful reality. It is time to face it, and move on. This feels like a major step forward. I am working on that today, putting things right, as best I can.

Looking Forward

Ravi enthusiastically voted to extend our conversations and keeping of journals past the 60 days of the inquiry period. "What's important for me is doing this with others," he said, affirming the strong and efficacious sense of collegiality and partnership that he had experienced during the inquiry. He noticed that his capacity to become mindful had significantly increased. The practice of split-attention and consciously linking awareness to everyday activities was "absolutely fundamental to the whole experience." He was focused specifically on bringing more mindful moments to his work life, and the strategy of linking awareness to the feel of his fingers on his computer keyboard seemed to be producing the result of his spending more moments awake while at work.

He had noticed during the inquiry that there was a profound professional benefit to the "ludicrously small amount" of mindfulness that he had added to his daily experience: the generation of creativity.

> I spend long periods of time being introspective and reflective about what's going on. And the question is–Is it possible to be mindful in that state? And I've come to the conclusion [that] it is. [This]is different from being totally absorbed in yesterday, glazed over about what's happening now, and lost . . . [you] bear witness to [a situation] and then have the experience . . . of ideas coming up out of that . . . something comes that you don't entirely understand, but it *comes* to you.

He concluded that the expansion of daily mindfulness was for him "a very slow process . . . it's going to be subtle and slow over an extended period." He noticed that while he was experiencing *many* spontaneous moments of waking up

into mindful awareness, his interest now was in *extending* those moments by practicing split-attention when they occurred.

> About whether I can *extend* mindfulness more now with daily activities . . . for me that's not the case. I do become mindful, but I haven't worked consciously on extending it, making an effort to extend it, and that's *really* what I want to do more of.

Ravi's second set of responses to the SAS scale, made 30 days into the inquiry period, showed an increase of capacity in areas such as connectedness, belonging, inner strength, and concern for others. He responses on the SELF-R scale indicated an awareness that his sense of self now had a greater independence from what he happened to feel, think, or do in a given situation. Ravi concluded his evaluation of his experience in typically understated fashion. After having practiced split-attention for three months, including applying it to several deeply emotional situations and to matters which he had been avoiding for some time, he concluded that:

> Mindfulness has delivered for me enjoyment and a sense of fun and a sense of the silly side of things, and that's a powerful thing . . . It's not that . . . my life is changed forever . . . I was floundering around, not having a clear idea of where I wanted to go, and I think it's getting clearer now.

Ursula

Ursula's Experience of Everyday Life

In Ursula's kitchen, hanging over the sink, there's a framed cartoon of a woman looking through a shop window at shelves of shoes. A large banner announcing FAB SHOES FOR SALE is plastered across the window, and the

caption reads: "Suddenly the ozone layer, plight of the blue whale, and world peace paled into insignificance." It was this combination of earthiness and what might be called *new age awareness* that Ursula brought to our inquiry. A single mother of two children, Ursula was in her late thirties and a talented singer-songwriter, who, after 20 years and a self-published CD, was still trying to break into the performing and recording industry. She lived in the countryside of northern England, and worked as an independent educational consultant, earning a modest living and focusing her attention on her young children, their schooling, and her song-writing.

She had an artist's sensitivity to her environment and was unusually articulate about her experiences. For many years, she had been drawn to matters spiritual and even arcane.

> I've read many books about consciousness and the relationship between the mind and wellbeing–Peter Russell, Eckhart Tolle, Shakti Gawain, Ken Wilber, Stuart Wilde, James Hillman, Neale Donald Walsch, Richard Moss, Arnold Mindell, George Trevelyan. I've done meditation and silent retreats–Buddhist and Sufi and even ones on my own, practiced meditation (in sporadic bursts of enthusiasm and discipline) gone to lectures and courses, practiced yoga for 7 years and done many Life Training courses aiming to develop myself and ultimately my ability to be present.

One of the most humorous moments in our first weekend was the ribbing she took when she introduced into the conversation a book she had read about water crystals which assumed the shape of a broken heart upon hearing the melody line from Elvis Presley's *Heartbreak Hotel*. Her willingness to push the boundaries of her awareness was one of her greatest strengths, and often she

supplied the metaphor, the phrase, or the word that we were seeking to describe our experiences of mindfulness in everyday life.

Her memories of significant experiences from her past often helped the rest of us recall similar moments for ourselves. During our first weekend, she shared several experiences which had elements of mindful awareness.

> I remember a time as well when I was quite young, looking in the mirror and realizing that was *me*. You know, that kind of thing– *that's Ursula!*
>
> I was often strongly evoked by things–a stunning moon, some particularly fantastic porridge . . . I had a particularly memorable moment during a recent gig when I was conscious that I was *present* in that experience–*aware* of the lights, the sound of my voice and [being] *in* the song, *in* the music.
>
> I also had a peak moment in July when I was walking in the most glorious summer weather through the beautiful countryside with a beloved friend, feeling very full in my heart. Later in that day, I wept with pure gratitude . . . listening to some gorgeous music on a state-of the-art sound system as we sped through more of that same glorious and beautiful countryside . . . [I] believed I was graced.

Ursula distinguished between experiences that were "peak" moments, and experiences of mindfulness which, for her, included "being aware of being aware," and which often brought with them an insight and discernment that shifted her understanding of life.

> I was walking over Battersea Bridge in Chelsea one morning– about ten years ago now . . . and suddenly I had this certainty of knowing that firstly, D.'s death–my partner at the time–would not affect my love for him, and, more strongly still, that my *own* death would not be the end of my existence. I *knew* that the *this* that animates me was immortal and I would endure. In that moment, I felt *beyond* my experience of my surroundings and yet still connected to everything.

This sort of experience had always captured Ursula's attention and framed her search for understanding. She spoke of having always sought a "something

which drew me," an "essence" that she experienced in the "deeply connected moments" of her life, and she utilized the metaphor of a tapestry to express this fundamental longing she had felt for mindful awareness.

> It's almost as if the needle of our perception passes through the fabric of the physical and emotional world into that which lies beyond, enabling us to experience ourselves as part of the tapestry and, at the same time, be aware that the tapestry is not all there is . . . I've always wanted to be *awake*.

She had experienced many moments of being completely "in the present:" experiences that included joy and fulfillment ("feeling very *there* when I'm on stage") as well as sadness and desolation ("I remember one time just sitting on the stairs and just crying . . . that sort of suddenly *coming home* to myself.") Through years of experience as a dancer, Urusla had cultivated an unusual sensitivity to her body and its sensations, and she often experienced mindful awareness in a very physical fashion.

> I had [many moments of waking up] in dancing–the way you get present, and all those things . . . about connecting with other people . . . before I called it *mindfulness*, that was my experience.

Ursula had long searched for understanding about these sorts of experiences. She had "sort of dabbled with" many things: silent retreats–Sufi and Buddhist–and a variety of books about Buddhism and mindfulness. Over the years, she had come to several conclusions about mindful awareness:

> I thought it was about having no passions and being very disconnected from your body, and being sort of detached, actually.
>
> I thought it was just the sort of thing you do in meditation. I . . . associated it very much with that whole retreat thing. I'd read about things like mindful weeing . . . [and thought], *Well, it's too advanced for me!*

Ursula came to the inquiry aware of the richness of being in the present moment, but also having concluded that this richness wasn't mindful awareness: "I was often present, but not *mindful*–as in *aware that I was aware*." Also, she had recently been through a frightening episode with regard to her health.

> I had a scare about my heart . . . a kind of heart palpitation, and I saw a doctor, and I have got an arrhythmia . . . it's not anything to worry about in particular; but what it did was throw me right up against my mortality . . . *I thought, I can't die now, I haven't washed up! I haven't recorded my second album!*

She presented this story with humor, but this experience had pushed her to confront the fact that she was being pulled in many directions by the things that mattered to her, as reflected in her struggle to balance earning a living with her desire to spend time with her children.

> My ex [-husband] said he was going to get married . . . and I was suddenly really afraid that (my children) would want to live with him. The amount of time I have with them is *so* precious and *so* short, I want to really be with them more . . . and I don't take on more work, even though I know I could do with more work.

As she evaluated her life with her purposes in mind, Ursula knew that she was completely comfortable with the process of songwriting, and that, in this activity, she was completely authentic. Her familiarity with and confidence in the creative process through which songs emerged was a touchstone for her life and a chief focal point in her experience of being mindful in the midst of her daily activities.

> I've been writing for such a long time. There are times when nothing happens . . . it's a question of just showing up . . . you get out your guitar and play and sometimes things happen and sometimes things don't. But also because I'm writing from my emotional state, I'll sit there with something–jealously, anxiety, my love for my son– . . . I'm *engaged* with my feelings . . .

> I'm always . . . totally out of my heart, that's the way I write my songs . . . I could translate all of my songs into actual experience I could say this is about me doing so and so, and this is what happened, and why I chose this over that . . . and it's *all* from my experience.

At this point in her life, Ursula was trying to find a similar sense of sensitivity and self-confidence in her efforts to earn a living, balance her priorities, and maintain vibrant relationships with other adults. She knew that she emerged from childhood worried about her capacity to make her way in the world, to be as creative and strong in work and relationships as she was in music and dance.

> It's like I'm not allowed to say what I want. That was my family set-up: I'm a middle child . . . I was trying to make everything right for everybody else, and I wouldn't know what I wanted.
>
> Even as a teenager I didn't want to do more work . . . I admit to being work-shy . . . there is something that needs to be adjusted there . . . and I'm trying to keep faith, to keep working, so that potentially my income could be big enough [to fund my song-writing].
>
> I don't think I'm very good with people . . . I was a barmaid for a while and I *never* smiled . . . I think one of the things I was afraid of was that I'd get hooked and I'd need to do things for people to get them to like me . . . and assume a certain shape to somehow please all of them.

Ursula brought one other insight about herself to the inquiry: "I like theory. I'm more comfortable in that realm, where it doesn't cut or touch." Ironically, it was Ursula's *willingness* to be touched by the experience of mindfulness that, combined with her songwriter's gift of expression, gave us wonderful descriptions of what it was like to be aware of being aware in the present moment.

Ursula's Experience During the Inquiry

When we started working together that first weekend to teach each other how to split our attention while undertaking a variety of everyday activities, Ursula noticed how quickly the process of thinking interfered with being mindful.

> What seemed to be happening is that my mind is just longing to glaze out, blob out, to just kind of go into that . . . *just let my thoughts run* . . . just longing to go on a kind of reverie . . . you know, like *enough of this mindfulness!*

She kept using split-attention to keep her mind from wandering away with her–as she engaged in whatever activity we were doing, she would feel her feet on the ground, listen to the variety of sounds around her, or watch the play of light on different objects around her–and her experiences led her to some interesting observations:

> My understanding of the idea of mindfulness has changed! I have an *experience* of it, and it's not what I thought it was. It's *much richer* . . . a very *sensual* experience.
>
> I'm very solid when I'm being mindful . . . I was noticing the heat in one hand, and I can feel my hand on my face, the warmth of the fire, that whole sort of thing . . . very grounding . . . obviously it's a benefit for somebody who's in their head a lot!
>
> It was much more delicious than usual . . . the air on my skin, the fabric of my clothes, my hair against my skin all seemed so much more intense.
>
> I seemed utterly full of the experience and had an awareness of my empty mind - it had nothing to add!

When George took us through an exercise of splitting our attention while looking around Ravi's living room, Ursula described her experience as *hearing* what she saw:

> I looked around at each thing..it was like playing chords of music . . . and then the green and the transparent glass were almost like different tunes . . . I had to keep breathing to let it keep happening,

> but it just felt like I was appreciating the *resonance* of the color . . . It was going into my eye, but it was landing in my heart.

During the three months of the inquiry, Ursula noticed that she was spending more time simply looking at things, and that her children guided her experience in this.

> When (my eldest son) finished his bath the other day, he was like, *No, no, no, wait, I don't want to come yet. I want to watch the whirlpool.* He likes watching the water go down the plug hole. And I just stood there and watched it too!

She called this sort of attention to her life, "tasting life more fully," and with it came a shift in perspective that she described as "bearing witness" or "being inside my body, looking out." She especially felt this happening when she was writing, performing, and dancing.

> I knew that I was having a *good* evening writing . . . but I didn't sort of want to get into..what the *process* was that was happening. I just wanted to *be present* to it . . . I don't think I've ever . . . been present to *noticing* what kind of evening I was having!
>
> I've become conscious of choosing [to be mindful] when I perform . . . In the last gig . . . it was almost like I backed down a gear, like into cruise, rather than being in fourth.
>
> I had the . . . experience of . . . being danced. I was much more aware of myself inside my body–as in the consciousness inside the puppet. The music was making my body dance, and I was the witness, but I was inside it . . . for a few moments, I was able to be without it being personal.

These experiences led Ursula to a conclusion about what is meant by the commonly-used phrase, *coming home,* and about the vastness of the experience of mindful awareness.

> It's the other way round from the way we think it is. The truth is that we're *already* home . . . *we wander away*. We think it's the other way round. We think we're not home and we have to get back.

> It's a *huge* space effect that we often get . . . I think that "sacredness" is probably the nearest encompassing description of the quality of mindfulness.

Ursula found that when it came to extending her experience of mindful awareness, it was helpful to keep shifting the focus of her split-attention. During our first weekend together, she led us through exercises of typing on our laptop keyboards and then walking by a local river–all the while shifting our attention from one element of our experience to another. She practiced this for the next month, and, on our second weekend, she talked about how it had become her practice to keep shifting the focus of her split-attention, so that she could extend the moments of mindful awareness that she was experiencing. She related this story of how she practiced split-attention while cycling into the town near her countryside home:

> I kept changing my split-attention [between] my physical sensations: from my breathing to the muscles in my legs, the weight on the heels of my hands on the handlebars, to the sound of my breath, the sound of the tires on the road, the sound of the wind in my ears, to the sight of the hedges disappearing from my peripheral vision, to noticing the occasional bird, the general beauty of the countryside, the old horses, the sheep in the distance, and then to the smells the grasses, the wind, the farmy smells, someone roasting something, the freshly felled tree and then back to the feel of the wind on my face and the difference in the temperature once the sun began to go down.

As Ursula continued to practice this technique, applying it in her various daily activities, she found that she had a greater sense of being *in* her life instead of simply going through it.

> [It's like] being in focus, tuned in, like the radio or television– having clear reception, being *really* present.
>
> [I had] the whole British?/ Buddhist? idea [that mindful awareness was] having no passions and being very disconnected

> from your body, and being sort of detached . . . and my experience, actually, was to be more involved–almost the complete opposite of detachment . . . to sort of dive more deeply into my experience.

This sense of being immersed in her everyday life brought a subtle change in Ursula's awareness of herself, a greater ease in her life, and an increase in her capacity to open herself to inspiration. This had a profound effect on her performance as a singer, and it added a dimension of magic to her already mature capacity as a song-writer.

> I was . . . aware of myself, being present and hearing the sound of my voice amplified in the room, and . . . I was *conscious that I was conscious* of it . . . it's much more physical . . . my physical presence [has] expanded . . . I'm just aware of my singing in a way that I never used to be . . . I was just *there*.
>
> Definitely there's a difference in the writing, particularly in that song [about mindful awareness] which I haven't got very far with at all–in how I was willing to let it evolve . . . it just had a different quality to it–it was almost like I was watching it come, you know, come through, as opposed to making it happen

Ursula noticed that this greater capacity to "be receptive and open" had an impact on her relationship with two of the parents from her children's school, people who had been critical of a proposal that Ursula and a colleague had brought before the school board. As much as she was able, Ursula practiced split-attention during two meetings with these parents and found that her feelings of defensiveness and irritation melted away; in their place was a sense of connection with these two women and gratitude for their criticism.

> I really realized that at those two . . . meetings, I really *enjoyed* myself. It was as if I really realized what a *benefit* it was to have been given the feedback we got–to find it tricky and difficult, and then to work through it. And that the women who had reacted to our memo had really *given* us something. We had really benefited as a team by having had those experiences . . .

> I think that, before, I would have regarded it as a difficult task I had to endure, [but], because I mindful whilst I was in it, I was just present to them, really conscious of wanting to get on their side and seeing what they had for us . . . *that* was helpful.

Ursula's experience with mindful awareness included an openness and receptivity not only to enjoyment and delight, but also to grief and, at times, hopelessness. Her willingness to be mindful during those times resulted in a greater sense of "knowing what I want," and there were times when that knowledge brought pain as well as certainty. When Ursula told us about a man with whom she used to be intimate, that sense of knowing what she wanted–and couldn't have with him any longer–was a source of genuine sorrow. She keenly felt her jealousy about his current relationship with another woman, and several times she said, "I *can't* make this OK with me!"

Ursula acknowledged that her experience of mindful awareness in other matters–for example, with the two parents at school–demonstrated that difficult and painful feelings, when experienced mindfully, eased in intensity. She left this discussion willing to bring more mindful awareness to bear in her encounters with this man, but she also acknowledged that this thought this would be a painful and difficult process.

Less painful for Ursula, but similarly daunting, was the prospect of bringing mindful awareness to the task of keeping her financial books. In many ways, it was surprising to Ursula how she could be experiencing more mindful moments in so many areas of her life (walking, being with her children, at work, songwriting and performing) and yet, when she sat at the computer to update her financial records, she lost herself in the activity, making it far more complex a

task than it needed to be, and not waking up into mindful awareness until *after* the activity was completed.

Looking Forward

About both of these matters–her former lover and her bookkeeping–she decided on a strategy of continuing our group conference calls and writing in her journal while continuing to practice mindfulness where it came most naturally for her, and to let it spread in its own way to other matters.

> There are some things I'm curious about attending to, things like the accounting, the admin–I want to try there. At the same time I want to *follow* [it] . . . I want to let it have its own path [and see] whether being more mindful in the things I *can* be mindful in then *rubs off* on the things that are more difficult.

This strategy reflected Ursula's second set of responses to the SAS scale, which indicated a greater connection with others, a greater sense of her own strength and balance in life, and a little less driven-ness about reconciling things with others. Her second set of responses to the SELF-R scale seemed to indicate a greater sense of separation from times past and times to come, perhaps reflecting the fact that now, after the 90-day experience of the inquiry, she was in fact now returning more often to a state of mindful awareness during her everyday life and not falling into as much worry and internal struggle.

> It's like you're swimming *nearer* to the surface generally–you're not going down to those murky depths . . . I can't even quite articulate it, but I seem *easier* generally, about everything . . .
>
> I did notice again that a lot of the time I was focused on my task, but . . . I kept coming back. I would spontaneously become conscious of things . . . suddenly I would remember.
>
> There was a real sense of having the big picture, but also having the present . . . , you know . . . *both* those things, which was really helpful. It's almost more exciting than fireworks, because it's like it's going to *work* in my life . . . there's just something

more substantial about it . . . there's an ability of there being real, fundamental, changes.

At our last meeting, Ursula performed a song she had written during the course of our time together. Her unique voice, the melody line, the guitar accompaniment, and the subtle shifts of cadence within the song generated numerous moments of mindful awareness for all of us.

Stay Awake

Help me out, help me in, help me to myself
All I need, I have here, I know my wealth
Awaken me, remind me again of the beauty here
How delicious it is
Or take it away and leave me with nothing
But this moment - but this

I want to stay awake - stay awake to this
Really taste - savour this

I'm feeling the kiss of the air on my skin
And the sounds of the music, my heartbeat within
And it's opening me
I want to stay with it, I want even more
Immersed in this moment, I swim for the shore
Where You're waiting for me

I want to stay awake - stay awake to this (Be Here Now)
Really taste - savour this

When I've forgotten to stay home, stay home
And I've forgotten there's a way home, way home
You bring me back (open the door to me)
You bring me back to myself, home to You

Stay on line, stay connected to me, stay in the moment
Meet me here
Where there's nowhere to go, nothing to do, no-one to be
But here, now, this (whatever that is)

I want to stay awake - stay awake to this (Feel This)
Really taste - savour this

My feet on the ground, the air on my skin
The sound of the music, my heartbeat within
It's all opening me
I want to stay with it, I want even more
Immersed in this moment, I swim for the shore
Where You're waiting for me

I want to stay awake - stay awake to this (feel it in me)
Really taste – savour this

When I've forgotten to stay home, stay home
And I've forgotten there's a way home, way home
You bring me back (open the door to me)
You bring me back, home to myself, home to You

Stay on line, stay connected to me,
Meet me here
Where there's nowhere to go, there's nothing to do, no one to be
But here, now, this (whatever that is)

I want to stay awake – stay awake to this (be here now)
Really taste – savour this

When I've forgotten to stay home, stay home
And I've forgotten there's a way home, way home
You bring me back (open the door to me)
You bring me back home to myself, home to You

Ah, help me out, help me in, help me to this
All I need, I have here, I know this bliss

I want to stay awake, stay awake to this
Really taste the One Taste, savour this
I want to stay awake to this

George

George's Experience of Everyday Life

Years ago, when I first met George, I was impressed with his gentleness and his seeming lack of any need to impress. It's not that he didn't have his fierce moments or his needs to be noticed, but he didn't wear them on his sleeve. In his late fifties, married for the second time, with older and younger children, George maintained a successful practice as a consulting engineer, living comfortably in Southeastern England, working from an office in his home, and in his own, unassuming way, pursuing a humanitarian path that had included a lot of self-development and a quietly burning curiosity about certain experiences that remained fresh in his memory.

> When I was about fourteen...I was walking along a country lane, and I realized . . . that . . . there was nothing, absolutely nothing, decided or determined . . . that I was on the edge, almost a precipice of unknowing . . . It was very unnerving . . . I had no idea what was going to happen next. I couldn't even take another step . . . It happened to me again twice after that . . . on a 370 bus . . . and a 174 bus . . . an awareness of the present . . . that *absolutely nothing* is determined beyond the moment I was experiencing.
>
> I had some wonderful experiences running . . . being at ease, running as if I was being carried along, floating along, and being aware of everything around me.

In terms of his spiritual orientation and experience, George had always followed his own inclinations and interests.

> As a child, I occasionally attended a Methodist Church for Sunday School. Although my parents did not attend church. Later I joined the Church of England and attended regularly, both high and low churches, into my 30s. My spiritual perspective comes from that background, although I no longer attend church. I did not associate with the way Christianity was taught to me, or the way I learnt about it, as aiming towards or encouraging mindfulness. I now regard myself as much more of an agnostic. My work with

> Life Training, including a deeper understanding of truth telling, forgiveness, purpose, the use of meditation and awareness, has led me back to a more spiritual life.

George had applied his natural sensitivity to many elements of his life: his marriage, his delight in being a parent, and his work providing engineering consultation for projects that made a significant difference in the lives of others. Through his self-development work and occasional Christian retreats–some "fairly regular meditation at one time, in the morning, but no other formalized experience of exploring mindfulness"–he had developed a meditative exercise that he would use, especially on occasions when he was worried or burdened.

> I used to have a notepad, and whatever came into my mind I would write down and let it go . . . when I got to the end of what seemed to be a list of things that my mind was waiting to tell me, I would then get into a peaceful place . . .
>
> And I used to do that every morning. I found it very helpful–a lovely way to start the day . . . I think now, in retrospect, yes, it was coming into the present . . . it was getting *away* from those concerns, those preoccupations . . . a very peaceful place. But I wouldn't call it mindfulness.

George had read both of Tart's books (1986, 1994), but he found their exercises "difficult to apply," and he came away from his reading believing that "mindfulness is very difficult, both to achieve and sustain." Furthermore, he came to the inquiry with the impression that mindfulness was "something that would need to be strived for or achieved through meditation, dedication and some effort or the careful blanking out of distractions." When he considered the subject of mindfulness, "thoughts of Buddhism come to mind" and he clearly stated that, "I would not have regarded mindfulness as part of my life on a day-to-day basis."

What did occur on a day-to-day basis in George's life was a lot of work. Like many who are self-employed, George lived with the uncertainty of knowing that no corporation stood underneath him, guaranteeing a salary to support his family. His joy in his clients' delight at his solutions to their problems quickly disappeared when those same clients came with complaints, or when suppliers for his business failed to deliver on their promises and he was required to confront them about their behavior. His chosen line of work carried a lot of pressure, and he often worked into the evening and sometimes during the weekend.

> I've had the habit before of always thinking of the next thing, staying busy . . . having to be a doer, capable of anything . . . And there's money–that whole side of it–money and contracts, and dealing with the legality of it–money and planners and people saying you can't . . . do it this way, and it's more money . . . then the potential for confrontation.

During Friday evening of our first weekend, as we explored what each of us wanted from this experience, George shared his desire for more capacity to be "in the present moment." He mentioned that he wanted to stop "switching off and going on to the next thing." He wanted to be free from his compulsion to "plan the next thing" instead of "being in *this* moment." He did acknowledge that a certain "magic" and "openness to the moment" was part of his normal working life. He spoke eloquently of solving design problems by "putting things into a large pot and letting them resolve themselves." He especially enjoyed and trusted that part of his work. However, he was painfully aware of the loneliness and relative isolation of his day-to-day professional life: "then there's me, working very often on my own. It's so familiar." When George described his self

reflection as being done "dutifully, always dutifully," it was clear that he was coming to the inquiry with a desire to lighten the heaviness of his daily load.

George's Experience During the Inquiry

It was the experience *slowing down* that most captured George's attention when he started to experience mindful awareness. He felt a "settling" that brought a significant sense of ease and refreshment. He first experienced it when he took us for a drive in his car and instructed us in letting our peripheral vision serve as points of focus for split-attention. The first time he took us through the exercise was difficult for him. The second time, he had a richer experience, a sense of slowing down that surprised and delighted him.

> That was *very* different! Yeah, I stayed *much* more aware. I was allowing myself to see the things out of the side of my head, and suddenly, I just wanted to slow down . . . *slow down* . . . rather than "get there" (laughs).

He continued to experience this slowing and this settling throughout the inquiry. He spoke of how it was "so much easier," and how "minutes are an *age* if you're really *there* with them." He was struck by the quality of gentleness that pervaded his life when he used split-attention throughout his day: "There's such a sense of gentleness in it . . . it's almost tangible at times, a *softness* in the air." When we gathered for our second weekend, he had more to share about his experience of mindful awareness, which had become much more a part of his life.

> It's being able to come back into mindfulness occasionally during the day . . . instead of just going on and on and on with things that I've been doing or things that would have preoccupied me, I just settle down into a space and things become a little bit clearer . . . my mind's not racing away . . . it's *lovely*...suddenly there [is] all the time in the world.

> I was walking back to my car after a meeting . . . I felt a physical relaxing in my lower chest, almost as if something had been released, and a sudden lightness, and a desire to slow the pace of my walking. I also noticed that I was looking at people passing in the eye, and I received positive responses with smiles, and interested looks in return. My face had relaxed and I felt fresh and renewed. It is *refreshing*, like having a nap!

This sense of refreshment and ease brought a vibrancy of the present moment into George's life, and this created a hunger to keep having an experience of being in *this* moment, which, after all, is the only moment that's real.

> Just being, reality, the reality is *all* that there is. If I'm not there, I'm somewhere else, and where the somewhere else is, I don't particularly want to be.

George noticed that the more time he spent in the present, the more *sensual* his experience of living became. He attended a retreat at which his wife was a presenter, and had "the most peaceful experience of my life" sitting in an abbey. He talked about "coming to my senses" and being aware of the "physicality" of the moment.

> I sat . . . [in the] abbey for about an hour, remaining mindful as much as I could without making it an effort. I felt a sense of complete peace. A few people walked in and out, and the sound of their heels clicking on the stone was loud and echoed around the space. I had a thought that the present is *all* we have and *coming to our senses* is a way to *get to* this, and, with this [thought came] a deep sense of gratitude for all that was there in that moment.

George also noticed during the weeks of the inquiry that "my highs are higher and my lows are clearer and, perhaps, also more powerful." After noticing that feelings like sadness and fear were emerging (as well as peacefulness and gratitude), he wrote in his journal: "there *are* feelings there that we're pushing to

one side." George noticed that, sometimes, being mindful brought to the surface difficult memories and feelings.

> It was interesting last night–wanting to be mindful, and being . . . with my son at school–and he was getting these incredible acknowledgments from his teachers, and it was wonderful. And I really wanted to stay there with him and be mindful, but my mind just whipped me away to being young myself and what it was like . . . *not* getting that sort of acknowledgement.
>
> It's everything, you know. It's not just nice stuff. It's whatever is going on. Mindfulness has to be the bad, the unpleasant, the unwanted feelings as much as the pleasant ones.

When that type of memory or feeling arose, George practiced using split-attention to *stay* with the experience. He often divided his attention by listening carefully to sounds around him, and he found that his feelings would change.

> The fear didn't actually get any stronger. I just was aware of the actual nature of, the quality of, the fear–what it was really like. And there was a desire to cry, it was like sadness, and a sense of going back. It had echoes of being a child, being a young child, that sense of just wanting to cry...not . . . panic, but a sort of sadness there...as if I hadn't felt it for 40 years or so [and now] allowed myself to feel it. And it didn't get any bigger, and it slowly went away, and I ended up feeling quite peaceful, actually . . . a bit subdued, sort of calm, certainly not fearful.
>
> It's possible to experience these things without dying, collapsing, becoming a baby, a child, useless individual . . . (laughter)..It's possible to experience these . . . by being *in* the moment, getting *into* the present.

George concluded that, when we are mindful, "reality sort of becomes alive to us." There's "nowhere to go," and whatever you're feeling is free to come flooding through. He reported that sometimes he would take time to dance to music, "feel the energy and life in it, connect with it like a lover." He discovered that when he opened himself to the present moment–regardless of

whether the moment was joyful or painful–there was something fundamentally *nourishing* about the experience.

> I get a real sense that being in the present *feeds* me . . . my whole being is *nourished* by being in the present . . . nurtured by, fed by reality . . . when I become mindful.

Over the weeks of the inquiry, George noticed a growing sense of connection to other people, and an increasing awareness of his gratitude for the part they played in his life, however small or fleeting. He reported small, spontaneous acts of gratitude that he felt inspired to perform.

> I wrote a letter of thanks to a client in the afternoon, aware that the project is coming to a close and wanting to acknowledge him and thank him for the way he has been. It was an easy letter to write and I sat being mindful as the words appeared on the page.

George also noticed a shift in his capacity to confront people and issues that he was facing. Mindfulness brought "not a spontaneous solution to problems, but a degree of clarity of thought," and this allowed him a greater freedom to know and to speak his mind without having to throw his weight around. For him, it involved a "letting go" of trying to control other people: "if you have something to say, saying it, and remaining mindful while you're doing it."

Over the course of the inquiry, George noticed that when he "switched on," as he called it, becoming mindful was something that happened *to* him, not something that he controlled or initiated with an act of will. He described this graceful experience:

> And the moments that I describe as waking up, coming into the present, becoming mindful, *came*, it seems to me, *spontaneously*, rather than something I did. *It just happened*.

At the same time, he recognized that, when he awoke in the morning, the act of *resolving to be mindful* appeared to have an impact on his capacity to wake up later on during the day. "*Wanting* it is somehow connected to remembering," he concluded. Furthermore, he noticed that the more time he spent awake, the more open he was toward others. His natural shyness was giving way to a desire for companionship, and his capacity to be present to his feelings was generating opportunities for that to occur.

> I was invited to a Christmas Party–a business one–me in my new suit, relaxed, comfortable and mindful, as I walked in. I was not on the list of invitees and they had no name tag for me. I caught my mind going off into: *they don't really want me here, I don't matter, I should have stayed away.*
>
> I felt the fear and decided to become mindful. A sense of relief came as I became aware of the present. My fear slipped away as I took in where I was and what was happening. It allowed me to be there with the people, who by then were busy creating a name tag, apologizing, giving explanations, looking concerned.
>
> What became important to me in that moment was being *there*, in that moment, with those people. The other stuff slipped away. What I wanted also became clear: I wanted to be *there*. This took no more than a few seconds, if that, and I was there, ready to go into the room and meet people.

During the inquiry, it became clear to George that his experience of being more mindful day-to-day–including during such seemingly mundane experiences as Christmas shopping–was bringing him to a greater awareness of who he really was and what he really wanted. He was "finding my own rhythm rather than pushing myself" and even becoming "completely accepting" of his idiosyncrasies and inclinations.

Furthermore, when George noticed that happenings in his daily life were apparently stimulating him to wake up into mindful awareness, he began consciously *extending* his awareness to more of his daily life experiences,

including things that previously had been sources of embarrassment, irritation, or anxiety. Once, when he was hearing a whistling in his ear that was caused by a hearing condition that had been with him for years, he realized that he could *utilize* this experience–about which he'd been embarrassed and irritated–in his desire to expand his experience of mindful awareness each day.

> The tinnitus I have was whistling like a jet engine idling . . . I usually blank [it] out, [but] I . . . listened to it for a while, noticing the quality of the sound, how it varied slightly and how it also has a faint echo. I realized that I am never without this sound, and I wondered if I could use it as a reminder to mindfulness. The thought of this excites me!

George found that, indeed, his experience of tinnitus started serving as a "wake up call" to his awareness. Soon, this capacity spread to other moments in his life, including moments of being completely reactive.

> I got angry one day. I won't give you the details of it–it was justified of course . . . (laughter) . . . and the whole process of experiencing that, and the effort–the effort of becoming mindful when I was in that state [helped me realize that] reality was me being *angry*, *not* me being nice . . . just *experiencing* it was quite amazing.

A couple of weeks later, George had a problem with his computer, and his capacity to become mindful seemed to help him find a solution. His program crashed, and he noticed that he was becoming enraged. Suddenly, he remembered that mindful awareness was possible. He split his attention by focusing on feeling his breath go in and out of his body while he stayed aware of his rage and of the feel of his body in his chair. After a few minutes, a answer to his problem floated up into his awareness. He reported that being mindful somehow allowed him to "give myself the room and time to find a solution to what had happened."

During the eight-week period following our second weekend, George had a remarkable experience, made even more memorable by the mindful awareness he brought to it. He started having chest pains and had to be taken to the hospital. Throughout the experience, George found himself waking up into mindful awareness, and, as he did, he would add an element of split-attention to whatever was happening. As a result, he was able to feel fear without being overwhelmed and to know what he needed to do, and do it, even when others were not being particularly helpful.

> Driving to the hospital, I had a chance to be mindful as I felt some fear . . . [the] sensation of fear when being mindful was like sadness. At one point I felt like crying. It was like an echo of feelings I had as a child. I noticed that *without* going back into reminiscing. The fear did not grow. It went, slowly, and I then felt subdued, almost peaceful. The other symptoms I get when I am fearful, such as needing the lavatory, did not happen.
>
> And when I got to the hospital . . . I was misdirected several times, and told by somebody in a very authoritative way, "Sit there, and wait; and somebody will come out and deal with you." But I *knew* it was the wrong place. Part of me *knew* that wasn't the right place to sit!
>
> And I got up, and went, and found the right place to sit, which I might not have done before . . . .there was a sense of being there and being aware, which was slightly different to what I normally would have been like. [Before], you know, I'd have been prepared to sit for 15-20 minutes before I realized it was the wrong place. Now I knew straightaway that I wanted to do something about it. And *that* was different.

It turned out that George was fine, and that the chest pains were not indicative of any trouble with his heart, but he was also delighted at what he had learned about the strength and certainty that was his when he stepped into a state of mindful awareness.

Looking Forward

George found that, at the end of the inquiry, many daily activities now reminded him to wake up: driving, running, shopping, sitting at his keyboard, looking out his office window, being with his wife and children. He still had doubts about his capacity to *keep* waking up during daily life, and he knew that his ability to *extend* his experience of mindful awareness by using split-attention was in its infancy. He was enthusiastic about continuing our conference calls for at least another three months, he was wary of pushing too hard to "improve" his capacity to be mindful, and he decided to trust a process that he called "viral mindfulness."

> I do become mindful, but I haven't worked consciously on *extending* it . . . and that's really what I want to do more of. That would seem to be part of the basis for what we're doing here, and finding techniques for doing that . . . I want to come back to that.
>
> I do have this concern that, if I'm *struggling* away to be mindful, I may reach a point where I say I'm giving up on this, and I have a suspicion that expanding this in areas where I *can* do it is the way for me to go.
>
> I decided . . . to concentrate on mindfulness [in situations where it] was *easier* for me, to see if this *infected* the other areas of my life.

After filling out the scales for a second time, George sent an email that revealed how the experience of responding to the SAS and the SELF-R questions had changed for him. When we had first employed the scales, all four of us had struggled with finding their relevance to the experience of using split-attention in our daily lives. George was eloquent in describing the impact of greater mindful awareness on his sense of self and identity:

> The Howden questions are short and understandable, I do not now see why I had a problem with these questions before.

> Many of the Friedman questions, although more convoluted, contain a reference to an experience of life in the present–number 21 for example: I am willing to describe my sense of self or identity as including the way I behave in living my life in the present.
>
> This now rings true for me. I am now prepared to describe the way I am when I am living in the present. This has become a reality for me. I do not think this is just about the use of language (now being able to find words to describe an experience) but an ability to describe what is a new and deepening appreciation of an experience of life. I can now describe the quality of my life experienced in the present.

George's second set of responses to both scales reflected that increased capacity for describing himself in relationship to more elements of his life: to others, to his past, to his future. Additionally, his answers indicated an across-the-board increase in his sense of connectedness, strength, and peacefulness.

At the conclusion of our inquiry, George wrote in his journal:

> The idea I have now is very different. I now regard mindfulness as being about accessibility, and the lack of striving or effort, and something that is there as a *choice*. It is now very much part of my daily thinking and awareness [and] is very apparent to me.

Roy

Experience of Everyday Life

When I first experienced mindful awareness, I didn't regard it as something apart from ordinary life. It was what happened to me when I walked the half mile from our home to the abandoned rock quarry, climbed one of the tall fir trees that bordered the pit, and swayed with the wind as it blew strongly off the Pacific Ocean. I was five or six at the time, and holding on to that tree as it

responded to a huge, unseen force, created a hunger for more of whatever it was that happened in those minutes. Throughout childhood, I had more moments like that–sometimes alone, sometimes with others–but it wasn't until that meditative experience in 1972, and what happened afterwards (about which I wrote in the Introduction) that I realized that this quality of awareness was fundamental to spiritual experience.

During the next three decades, it was the experience of mindful awareness–touching it, forgetting about it, getting wrapped up in other things, having it return unexpectedly–that pulled me into and through my various explorations of things religious, psychological, and spiritual. When I came to our inquiry, I had been through three years of doctoral study, undertaken a year's sabbatical from the organization I co-founded (Life Training Program, 2002), become self-employed when this organization had only enough money to fund the salaries of its current administrative leaders and not its co-founders, and, through all of this, had discovered that–for me, at least–the experience of mindful awareness was *the* thing that mattered most, and the search for how to have it more often *right in the midst of my daily life*, had become the primary focus of my life.

I had first learned about split-attention in 1981 from a former Gurdjieff teacher, to whom my partner and friend, Dr. Brad Brown, had introduced me, and for the eighteen months prior to this inquiry, I had experimented with using this technique to link mindful awareness with activities that were fundamental to my daily life. I had found that doing this appeared to result in my having more

moments of spontaneously *waking up* into mindful awareness. I had done this completely on my own, and I was concerned that what I was experiencing was so idiosyncratic to my personality and interests, that it simply wouldn't be helpful to others. It had been so helpful for me, however, that I was very interested to see what the experience of others might be.

When I started the inquiry, I was having numerous moments each day of waking up into mindful awareness. Often, when walking from my desk to another location in my home, I would find myself completely in the present moment and aware of being there. My attempts to extend or lengthen these moments had met with only a little success, and I felt lonely in my pursuit of this experience yet unsure about undertaking it with others; frankly, I was afraid that other people would find it completely unhelpful, and then I'd *really* be alone with the most important experience of my life. This was a familiar fear, the result of a self-doubt and tendency toward martyred isolation that had plagued me throughout childhood. The past three years–which had included the experience of a sabbatical leave, an ultimately liberating shift to self-employment, and doctoral study–had rather forcibly opened my awareness to new possibilities of independent thinking *and* appreciation for the thinking of others, and I came to the inquiry with a determination to *really discover* what it was like for other people to undertake this practice.

I was in the second year of being an independent contractor. I provided personal and professional coaching for a small number of clients, and I worked as a consultant for a company, co-founded by my partner, which applied to corporate

life the human development technology we were offering through the non-profit organization for which I continued to serve as a trainer and member of the board. I was finding that what I offered in my new roles was valued and apparently helpful, although my habitual self-doubt still nibbled at the edges of my self-confidence. Also, even though I had intended for years now to resume writing–I had self-published two books, but had written nothing for publication in twelve years–I still wrestled with a sense of hopelessness about ever writing something that others would find worth reading. I wondered if I had a book in me about mindful awareness, and I saw this inquiry as a chance to see if this notion had any ground in reality.

Experience During the Inquiry

During our first meal together, on Friday evening of the first weekend, I shared an experience from my college years.

> I was in the car driving down the highway from San Francisco down to Los Angeles, and was right on the edge of the coast near Carmel and Big Sur, where you look down and see the water, four hundred feet below . . . and I realized that there was *nothing preventing me* from turning right and going off the cliff . . . I had *complete freedom* to do that, and it scared me so badly I had to pull over.

That experience reflected the heady, anxiously liberating mix of emotions that I was feeling at the start of the inquiry experience. I was focused on: (a) being transparent regarding all the elements of the inquiry; (b) sharing my experience in a way that didn't overly influence that of my co-researchers; (c) explaining the practice of split-attention and then leaving in their hands the responsibility for teaching it to all of us in the group; and (d) observing of all four

of us as we undertook this inquiry experience. I was hopeful that what we were going to do would matter, but, frankly, I didn't know if it would.

By Saturday afternoon, I noticed that I was no longer worried in the slightest about our becoming a group of *co*-researchers. Each of us was having our own experience, each of us was sharing that experience in detail with the group, and the sense of discovery and surprise was palpable. I noticed that my co-researchers were having their own experiences of mindful awareness and describing them in their own way. During a break on Saturday, I recorded the following observation which reflected my relief and appreciation of our differences:

> It's thrilling to see them having different experiences . . . Ursula with her focus on auditory image and metaphor, Ravi with his careful, scientific approach, not leaping into enthusiasm, George struck by the physicality of his response.
>
> I see, and have confirmed with all three, that everyone is practicing mindful awareness, going in and out of it, as we talk. There is a gentleness to the discussion, a sense of respectfulness, listening, building on what each other says. There's no lack of robustness to what we're saying, but there is no need to prove anything either. The conversation moves freely from one to another, and everyone is contributing.

This mutual respect for and interest in each other freed me to more fully focus on my own experience. I noticed that I kept having the refreshing, gently startling experience of returning to mindful awareness. This felt familiar, like waking up from a nap: a sense of freshness and added alertness, a quiet excitement, and my senses becoming more acute. I had known about the quiet joy of being in the present moment, but, when Ravi took us through an exercise of applying split-attention to the experience of tasting chocolate, I was struck by *the ease and joy of the experience.* My isolation of the previous 18 months had

stripped away a lot of the sheer pleasure of being mindful, and my participation in our group experience had opened that possibility for me again.

> It's too *enjoyable*, it's too *easy*. It's like 72% Tesco chocolate–there's got to be something *wrong* with it! (laughter) Yet I know that there's not something wrong with it–there's something terribly *right*–and not in the kind of California, new age, be-your-own-best-friend bullshit sort of way–just do what you like and let the rest of the world go to hell . . .

During the thirteen weeks of the inquiry, I experimented with *extending mindful awareness when I noticed I was awake*. I would keep doing whatever it was that I was doing, and also put my attention on another one of my senses at the same time: usually I would add breathing, or listening, or feeling my hands, and the experience of being *aware that I was aware* of the moment would last a few seconds longer. There were times when this sense of awake-ness would last for a minute or two, but, most of the time, it extended for 20 or 30 seconds, and I would only be aware that it had disappeared when, a few minutes later, I would *wake up* again. The more this happened, the more longing I felt to have it happen again. It was just so enjoyable, relieving, and thrilling, that, it reminded me of earlier times in my life when the first taste of mindful awareness had moved my heart so profoundly. I decided to drop my wariness and just follow where it led.

> I want to let myself just follow the *bliss* of it and let that grow in me and guide me . . . to experiment with whatever it takes to follow the purpose of seeing how awake and aware I can be throughout the day

From that first weekend onward throughout the inquiry, I found in myself more courage and determination to keep trusting "that sense of rightness in myself, what the Hindu's call original goodness." I had grown up accusing

myself of being selfish, and it seemed very risky indeed to trust the deeply satisfying feeling of joy and delight that often were part of the mindful experience; but that was a risk that I was now willing to keep taking. I felt a little foolish and adolescent, but I found a solid sense of self-trust inside:

> Risking being self-indulgent, risking being misled, risking . . . and I think I'm on to something–that I *really can trust my own sense of what's right for me* . . . and I think that somehow when I or we get present, what we *really want* wakes up inside and that's trustworthy. That's goodness. And I *trust* my goodness.

This increased trust in my own goodness brought with it an increased confidence in my own decisions. I had become much stronger about this during the past couple of years, but this fresh experience of "following the bliss I feel in those moments when I'm awake" *settled me down inside*, and brought me to a sense of *standing on solid ground.* Whenever I would have a choice to make, nearly always I had the experience of spontaneously waking up, choosing to split my attention, and waiting until a rock-solid certainly arrived. I would know exactly what I wanted to do, and I had the courage and motivation to do it without hesitating or making a big deal about it. I wrote in my journal about a small example of this that occurred when I was on the train to London, planning my schedule in anticipation of our second research weekend which was three days away. I realized that I had committed myself to an ambitious schedule that included coaching work and a company Christmas party. I felt uneasy about it and tended to my unease by splitting my attention until I knew what I wanted to do.

> Now, on the train from Gatwick to Victoria (and the slow one at that!), there's time to let the scenery be seen on both sides as it

> passes by, and to feel my breath, and to let go of some of the *bucking up* I can now sense I've been doing.
>
> Except for the call I'm making today with Ravi, Ursula, and George, I really don't *want* to do the rest of my schedule–which includes an extended coaching session, a trip to South London, and a Christmas party with [my colleagues]. All that would be fun, and it's a unique opportunity to celebrate with my friends . . . but *something in me* wants more quiet and uninterrupted time to myself.

I was also experimenting with extending the practice of split-attention to moments when I recognized that I was in the grip of habitual behavior. I had been on one sort of diet or another for 35 years, and, when I began practicing split-attention in earnest 18 months ago, I had decided to push myself no longer. A year later, after hundreds of moments of mindful awareness during daily life, I hadn't lost any weight, but I was over my guilt and regret. At that point, I chose to utilize a program of eating and exercise on which I had lost 15 pounds. When we started the inquiry, I was pleased with how I was eating, but I was also aware that I wasn't continuing to lose the last 10 pounds. I would eat more food in moments of mind*less*ness than moments of mind*ful*ness could counteract. It was the experience of the inquiry itself–the cooperative, collaborative experience with my co-researchers–that contributed to my capacity for *extending mindful moments when they occurred*. It took several weeks, but the shift occurred:.

> What's changing for me is that, where I used to eat in front of TV or videos . . . I am beginning to sit down [at a table] and *taste* what I eat. I'm a babe in the woods on this one–just starting–but it's one of the main things to come out of this for me. [There's a] release of habits when I'm mindful . . . I just don't do them.

As I was less controlled by habit, I also stopped trying so hard to control some of the circumstances and the people around me–although I had to go through some very painful feelings to do so. This was especially true in my

professional life. I had been angry at not being included more in the organization which I had co-founded, and I had been worried about whether or not consulting work and new coaching clients would continue to arrive. The more I met these matters with mindful attention, the more aware I was of my discomfort, my disease, and my emotional pain.

> This sense of knowing what I want . . . and knowing when I'm discontented–this is absolutely critical for me . . . , and I've had a real upsurge of that . . . something will happen, and I'll just have this visceral hit of, *I don't like that*!
>
> So what the mindfulness is doing for me is that I'm really *far more aware* of when I'm angry, of when I'm upset, when I'm bored . . . .waves of hopelessness and self-doubt–less often, but far more painful than before.

This experience of feeling my negativity turned into a real roller-coaster: far more ups and downs than ever before. It was as if the governor had been taken off my emotions, and my experience of irritation, impatience, and discomfort was more immediate and impossible to ignore. Interestingly, however, I would often find myself *waking up* in the midst of these negative emotions. I would get angry or hurt or afraid, and within a few moments would suddenly *remember* myself, come awake, and then often be able to practice split-attention.

These experiences of (a) trusting myself to know what I really wanted and (b) feeling my discontent and even my rage at things I couldn't control resulted in my making some significant choices: to become more proactive about offering my time, free of charge, to the non-profit organization I had co-founded; to become involved in actively protesting my country's involvement in the Iraq war; and to become active in a local organization for the promotion of the arts. I

noticed that I was no longer feeling as victimized by the actions or inactions of others. During a conference call, I shared with my co-researchers that I was developing a stronger sense that "I have something to contribute too . . . without apology, undue hesitation, or over-reaching."

I also noticed an increase in my capacity to know what next to do, almost as if by magic. On our second weekend together, I shared the following.

> When I'm coaching somebody, I just *be* with them, and *be* with them, and *be* with them, and resist the temptation to analyze what's happening, and just wait and see what floats up to say.
>
> And when I do that, I . . . just *know* what it is that needs to be said or done to cut right through whatever is going on. And I'm *really* intrigued by that. Somehow the state of mindfulness opens up a knowingness that . . . can go right to the heart of it.

As I trusted myself more, I also started trusting others to a greater degree. I found myself seeing more of their goodness, respecting their opinions, and noticing my connection with and reliance upon their contributions to my life. I became "far more optimistic and far less jaundiced about the human condition." Over the years, as I had explored mindful awareness mostly in isolation, I had become increasingly cynical about other people's capacity to be awake and aware and their willingness to learn about it. During the inquiry, this cynicism disappeared. It wasn't that I'd become naïve about human resistance, it was that I had dropped my defensive, martyred perspective on humanity. During our second weekend, I talked about this with my research partners, and about my growing confidence that I could now make a greater contribution than I had before.

> I would like to take any group in this restaurant and see if they'd be interested in doing an inquiry. We could introduce them to split-attention and say, *Why don't we practice this and see what*

> *happens, and share with each other what happens?* . . . I'm betting that a good majority of them would [say Yes].
>
> What's changed for me . . . is a greater confidence . . . that, as member of my dissertation committee said, this is the *pay dirt*, and this is not just something *I* see, but . . . that *other* people see this and share it too . . . I find that incomparably thrilling. And I am really, really, *really* excited about figuring out how to make this available, and it doesn't seem as complicated to me as it used to.

It occurred to me that *our* experience of the inquiry could provide helpful insights into how what we were learning could be offered to others. It was clear that adding to my day even a quantitatively *small* amount of mindful awareness was making a significant difference. It was also clear to me that the collegiality and mutuality of our inquiry had been a critical element not only in their learning about split-attention, but in *my* learning about the possibilities of offering this to others.

Looking Forward

I scored exactly the same on both sets of responses to the SAS and SELF-R scales. From this I concluded that what shifted for me during this inquiry–the easing of my cynicism and my increased conviction about offering a contribution–were not particularly indicated in those scales. My own experience of mindful awareness was so enriched by the collegiality and companionship of my fellow researchers, that I embraced our decision to continue our telephone conversations, our occasional posting of journal records, and face-to-face meetings whenever we could arrange them. This sense of collegiality and cooperation may well be one of the most important benefits of my research experience. Yes, I am waking up far more often during my daily life. Yes, I am

significantly more successful at extending those awakening moments when they occur. However, it seems even more valuable that my cynicism about others–their intentions, their capacity, and their fundamental goodness–has given way to a trust not only in them but in myself and in the greater forces within life that I believe are moving us all forward to greater awareness in response to the needs of our world.

Learnings from the Case Studies

Having explored the individual experiences of the co-researchers, the focus now turns o the learnings we experienced in common. We began this study with a core question: *what happens when people link mindful awareness to everyday activities?* During the 90 days of the inquiry, the four co-researchers engaged in 70 hours of conversation, 95% of it face-to-face. We explored this core question–and the sub-questions listed in the Introduction–by undertaking repeated cycles of experience and reflection, in which we kept asking ourselves questions like: When were we mindfully aware? How did we know? What did it feel like when it happened? What happened to our thinking process when it occurred? What did we notice physically, and what was its impact upon our awareness of our daily lives at work and at home?

Our response to the core question will be addressed in detail. First, it will be helpful to briefly answer the sub-questions and indicate where further information about their subject matter can be found. The sub-questions, listed in the Introduction, were:

- *What was the participants' previous experience of mindful awareness?*

  The three co-researchers were familiar with the experience of mindful awareness, but previous reading and retreat experience had left them believing that mindful awareness either was too difficult to generate in everyday life or it was something that was only experienced in specialized circumstances like retreats or in extensive periods of meditation. I had been practicing linking mindful awareness with split-attention for eighteen months, but I had been doing so in isolation and was experiencing doubt about the efficacy of this practice for others. Further individual details are available in the case studies.

- *What was their estimate of how often they experienced spontaneously waking up each day (Tart's first form of mindful experience), and how long did these periods of mindfulness last?*

  The experience of waking up spontaneously in our daily lives happened quickly and sustained itself throughout the inquiry period. We continued to experience this awakening many times a day; although the duration of mindful awareness was often a few seconds, we all experienced extended periods of wakefulness, and, by the end of the inquiry, we were focusing our practice of split-attention on *extending* the moments of waking up when they occurred. More details are available in each case study.

- *How did other people, considered authoritative in the field, describe their mindful experience and its benefits?*

The descriptions of the experience of mindful awareness, available in the Literature Review, were virtually the same as those reported by the four of us who participated in the study, with the exception of some extraordinary experiences of Fifth Level consciousness and beyond that were reported by masters in the field.

- *What changes were there in the consistency and quality of mindful moments in the participants' everyday lives?*

  There were *significant* changes in our experience of mindful awareness. The three co-researchers, whose experience had been limited to occasional moments in unusual situations, found their daily lives filled with moments of mindfulness, and I found a greater capacity to extend mindful moments than I had been able to generate practicing on my own. Further descriptions of our experiences are available in the case studies and in the material below.

- *What differences were there in the everyday experience of the six specific everyday activities that participants were linking to mindfulness? How effective were each of the six activities in calling people to mindfulness in the midst of everyday life?*

  All of us found that certain of the split-attention activities were more helpful to us than others; we each had our favorites. Furthermore, we found that we developed split-attention practices to link mindful awareness to *other* daily activities that were central to our lives.

Further details about our idiosyncratic adaptations of the split-attention technique are available in the case studies.

- *What was the impact of this program on the overall quality of participants' lives?*

  At the closing meeting of our inquiry, we agreed that the impact on our lives had been profound, so much so that we committed to continue our journal-writing and conference calls to support its further development in our everyday existence. Further details are available in the case studies above and in the benefits section below.

Now, in response to the core question of this inquiry–*what happens when people link mindful awareness to everyday activities?*–we generated a lot of information. Our individual answers to this core question are expressed in the case studies above. This material will be summarized below in four sections: (a) our experience of mindful awareness; (b) the benefits we realized from that experience; (c) themes that emerged during the inquiry; and (d) what we learned about creating the conditions for everyday mindfulness to occur. These sections are written with the case study material in mind, and, the discussion is extended only when a particular subject has not already been presented in detail within an individual case.

Our Experience of Mindful Awareness

The categories below–physical, mental, emotional, awareness, and capacity–are somewhat artificial. When, for example, does an experience stop

being *physical* and start being *mental*? The categories are not intended to be rigorous, but merely to serve as gathering points for the descriptions of our experience.

Experiencing it Physically

When moments of mindful awareness arrived, they usually were accompanied by an immediate sense of *refreshment*, as if awakening from a nap. We were immediately more relaxed, like there was suddenly less to do, less to fret over, less to be accomplished. It was like a sudden, warm, summer breeze, bringing the scent of blossoms or the taste of salt from the sea, waking us up. It was often accompanied by a profound sense of *peacefulness*.

Also, there was a greater alertness, something we described as a *coming to our senses*; hearing, taste, touch, smell, and sight suddenly *switched on* and became highly sensitive. Furthermore, this greater *sensuality* seemed to be a vehicle for *nourishment*–as if the real, daily events of our lives, when experienced with mindful awareness, somehow *fed and nurtured* us.

We also noticed a physical sense of *slowing down*. This was more than simple relaxation; it had the quality of time itself slowing slightly: people didn't pass by as quickly, sights and sounds seemed to linger. It was like there was more time available in the moment, as if the moment in which we were mindful had somehow *stretched or extended itself*. There was nowhere to go and nothing to do. We felt free, in the moment, to just *be* with whatever was happening. We spoke of this as a sense of *settling* down, being *grounded*, of *coming home* to where we belonged.

At the same time, and somewhat in contrast, we often felt a physical *lightness* in these moments: both a sense that there was more illumination (things were visibly more clearer, more dimensional, more in focus) and that the people, circumstance, and situations of the present moment seemed less heavy, demanding, and burdensome. Our bodies felt more limber: attuned to their surroundings, yet liberated from their moorings.

Experiencing it Emotionally

Our initial experiences of mindful awareness were often filled with a significant increase in *enjoyment*. We laughed a lot–with an easy, full, and textured sense of humor, in which everyone had room for their own experience of joy. We felt *delight* in many things, and, often, we experienced a spontaneous surge of *heartfelt appreciation* for the people and circumstances that were part of a given moment.

In the third week of our inquiry, each of us had an unexpected eruption of painful emotions: anger, sorrow, jealously, loneliness, and fear. This led to one of our most profound learnings: that mindful awareness brought us into *reality:* our *real* feelings about what was *really* happening to us. We had a profound insight into the tendency–so strong in our culture–to associate mindful awareness with *pleasant* feelings (peacefulness, joy, gratitude, etc.) and to believe that *withdrawing* from the pain and chaos of daily life was necessary in order to be mindfully aware.

We found that when we remembered to apply split-attention in those painful moments, we were able to *feel* those painful moments without being

overwhelmed by them. In time–often just a few minutes–the extreme pain of the emotions dissipated, leaving in its wake an authentic, human feeling such as sorrow or grief. Often, courageous and wise choices came out of such moments, a direct result of being mindfully aware in the face of whatever was happening.

We each discovered a release of compulsiveness and competitiveness, a freedom from the driven sense of *having* to do something: including any sense of *obligation*, *guilt*, *doing something because it was good for you,* or having to *improve* yourself or *compare yourself* favorably with others. This resulted in less habitual behavior and a greater sense of patience, forgiveness, and trust–with ourselves and with others.

Experiencing it Mentally

When mindful awareness occurred, there often seemed be a halt to the thinking process. There was a sense of the mind taking a breath, a *very full emptiness,* in which we were present to whatever was happening without the usual mental chatter of judgment, associations, and imaginings about the future. It was an unnerving, yet stimulating sense of *unknowing:* as if we knew nothing and yet somehow knew everything, all at the same time. This was a *word-less* space that was indefinable, yet undeniable.

As if by magic, solutions, ideas, insights, and choices would *suddenly emerge*. Over the course of the inquiry, each of us found a greater trust in this emergence, and we all relied on it for clarity of thought and penetrating insights that favored simplicity and directness. The mind's imaginative powers seemed to relax for a moment, and complex situations suddenly seemed understandable and

a path forward was suddenly clear. A wisdom or discernment would occasionally seem to *come through us* when we were mindfully aware, even if it only lasted for a few seconds.

We also noticed that, in moments of mindful awareness, we often remembered *other* moments in which we had also been mindful. It seemed to be a case of *like remembering like*, and a lot of our childhood memories of being mindful came to us in this way. It was as if the *experience* of being mindful in a particular moment somehow linked itself to the memory of other experiences, and those past memories were fresh and present.

Impact on Awareness

Awareness of ourselves

The more we experienced being awake and aware in the midst of our daily lives, the more we noticed that we were gradually becoming more aware of who we were, what we wanted, and what we were going to do. At our closing meeting, it was obvious how much each of us had filled out in terms of our presence and our ease within ourselves. Additionally, we had all made decisions about our lives that were changing things in significant ways.

It seemed to us that our *individuality emerged* as we became more mindful day-to-day. We slowly became more *defined*: our longings and our choices were clearer, and we were freer to pursue our deepest desires without embarrassment or hesitation. We trusted the ground on which we individually stood.

Awareness of others

Split-attention required objects on which to put our awareness, and, in our daily lives, often these objects were other people. Putting our attention on others quickly gave way to being far more aware of them, and greater awareness appeared to result in greater intimacy, connectedness, and appreciation of the multitude of people in our lives.

During the three months of the inquiry, each of us was pulled into more honest relationships with others, and we experienced a deepening of our compassion for others and our desire to serve them by sharing what we were learning. This desire resulted in some significant decisions by each of us that took us forward into the future.

Awareness of "more"

Each of us had moments of touching and being touched by a sense of the larger forces that shape our lives. Often, we spoke about the sacredness of what we felt, the spaciousness that we sensed between us and around us. Among our group, we had a fairly wide range of belief systems–including existential atheism and new age spirituality–but, when we stuck to describing our experience instead of discussing it, we had many moments of sensing a vastness that would fill up the room in which we were sitting. Our usual response was to sit in silence.

The experience of mindful awareness appeared to be *catching.* If one of us woke up, the others soon followed. We talked about how we could see it happen for each other, and seeing it in someone else simultaneously generated it in oneself. It seemed to have a *life of its own,* and when it caught one of us, it quickly got all of us.

The Benefits of being Mindfully Aware

It is impossible not to repeat below what has been said above, for we learned that *to experience* mindful awareness is to *benefit* from the experience. The list below is intended to provide a summary-at-a-glance of the beneficial outcomes of our three months of everyday mindfulness practice. As already stated, the categories are somewhat artificial and simply provide a convenient way to present the list.

Physical Benefits

- Slowing down.
- Relaxation and ease.
- Release from internal driven-ness.
- Sense of lowered heart rate and blood pressure (not actually measured).
- More relaxed sleep.
- Enhanced sensuality and sharpening of all senses.
- Enhanced pleasure in eating and drinking.
- Flexibility and freedom of movement.
- Greater sexual enjoyment.
- Increased awareness of physical needs.
- Expanded motivation to care for self.
- Release from compulsion and habit.
- Significant increase in energy.

Emotional Benefits

- Awakening of authentic feeling.
- Increased capacity to feel painful emotions without being overwhelmed by them.
- Dissipation of feelings like fear, anger, irritation, anxiety, resentment, and loneliness.
- Strengthening of feelings like compassion, love, awe, wonder, sorrow, grief, gratitude, and joy.
- Greater emotional maturity.
- Greater intensity of feeling.
- Increased self-confidence and trust.
- Sense of connection to people and things outside of ourselves.
- Sense of aliveness.
- Sense of refreshment and delight in whatever moment was happening.
- Increase in curiosity and eagerness.

Mental Benefits

- Mental clarity.
- Accuracy of perception.
- Release from mental chatter.
- Relief from the flood of memories and imaginings about the future.
- Development of a still, calm center.
- Discernment, wisdom, and understanding.

- Insight, solutions, perception of new possibilities.
- Strengthened intentionality and purposefulness.
- Clarity of choice.
- Increased mental focus and motivation.
- Release from judgmental thoughts, directed at oneself and others.
- Greater capacity to forgive.
- Expanded simplicity of thought and expression.

Increased Awareness

- Expanded self-awareness, self-confidence, and self-esteem.
- Knowing what we really wanted and where we really stood.
- Knowing what was true for ourselves.
- Less self-deception.
- Increased sense of one's own genuine goodness.
- Increased compassion for others.
- Expanded appreciation and gratitude for others and for our circumstances.
- Increased sensitivity toward others.
- Expanded sense of connectedness with others and with the larger forces that shape our lives.
- Greater intimacy and love.
- Expanded sense of the sacred, the spacious, the unknown, the *more* of life.

Increased Capacity

- Expanded ability to be proactive.
- Flexibility of response to daily events.
- Increased creativity.
- Increased trust in the everyday events of life themselves.
- Expansion of ability to let go of what cannot be controlled.
- Courage to take our place in the situations calling for our presence.
- Ability to take risks and face challenges.
- Willingness to contribute what we have.
- Expansion of excitement about *getting on with it*, whatever *it* may be.
- Significant increase in the capacity to use split-attention.
- Significant increase in ability to be awake and aware in the midst of everyday activities.

Emergent Themes and Reflections

There are few important themes that emerged during the inquiry and that are visible in the case study narratives, the description of mindful awareness experience, and the list of benefits. They are briefly discussed below.

Sixty Seconds

About halfway through the inquiry period, when we were discussing the significant benefits we were enjoying from our experiences of mindful awareness, it occurred to us to ask the quantitative question: how *much time* did we think that we were spending each day actually engaged in mindful awareness. We all

acknowledged that, although we all had occasional experiences of extended mindfulness, that our common experience was that we would wake up, be mindful for a few seconds, go back to sleep, and wake up again. One of us suggested that a total of *sixty seconds* was about right for the average day, and we all laughed in agreement. We concluded that adding *only a minute* of mindful awareness to our days appeared to be generating significant changes in our experience. From that point on, the term *60 Seconds* symbolized an extraordinary return on investment. A little mindfulness went a long way, and we glimpsed a bit of what might become possible as we learned to *extend* the moments of mindful awareness that we spontaneously experienced.

Impact of our Mindful Awareness on Others

As the inquiry progressed, our shares included many references to the shifting quality of our relationships with others. As we became more mindful in our conversations and encounters with the people at work and at home, we noticed that others became less defensive and more open in response. We concluded that the receptive and attentive space that mindfulness appeared to create within us was having an effect on the people around us. It seemed to us that we were easier to talk to when we were mindfully aware, better listeners, and more critical thinkers. All of this seemed to add value to our presence with others, and the responses we received appeared to verify this conclusion.

Splitting the Atom

It appeared to us that being completely present to a given moment seemed to release a nurturing and nourishing power that wasn't nearly as apparent if one

wasn't awake and aware. Mindful awareness seemed to unleash a sense of fullness in the moment: a sense of completeness, spaciousness, and fulfillment that made an ordinary experience *so much more,* it was like the splitting of an atom. This was difficult to language, but this metaphor spoke to the magic that appeared to be contained in every moment: answers to problems were *in the moment*, deep feeling was *in the moment*, richness and bigness and a sense *everything necessary* was *in the moment*, but *only* when *we* were in the moment. Otherwise, it was just another moment.

Engagement with Everyday Life

The three co-researchers acknowledged that they had come to the inquiry with conclusions in place about mindful awareness: that it was only to be found in meditation, and that it was something to be experienced in extraordinary circumstances, not in the course of ordinary daily life. It was clear to all of us that we lived in a culture that shared these conclusions and was largely unappreciative of and blind to the experiences we were having. The co-researchers acknowledged that they had come to the inquiry eager to learn about being awake and aware, but regarding the activities of their daily lives as fundamental *distractions* to mindful awareness, distractions from which they needed to *withdraw* in order to experience being mindful. We realized that periodic withdrawal had its place, but that everyday life was the fundamental laboratory and training ground for mindful awareness.

A Spirit of Inquiry

In the brief discussion we had on our second weekend concerning making this experience of everyday mindfulness available for others, it occurred to us that the *context of inquiry* was very valuable as a pedagogical device. It spoke to the *natural curiosity* that we felt in ourselves and that we assumed existed for other people. Furthermore, it preserved the independence of judgment and the requirement to explore for oneself that, to us, seemed critically important in our own discoveries during the study.

We also recognized the necessity of having had mindful experiences in our past that we could draw on as reference points for what we were seeking. We didn't have ideas as to how to help people with no experience of mindfulness would generate this curiosity, but it didn't seem beyond the realm of possibility that it would happen. It seemed to us that we could provide assistance to curious and interested groups of people who, just as we had done, could enter, mutually and equally, into an inquiry as co-explorers, practice split-attention, and–in a open and disciplined way–share with each other what they discovered. In this approach we saw pedagogical possibilities.

Difficulties and Discouragements

We identified three primary sources of difficulty and discouragement in our efforts to be awake and aware more fully in our daily lives:

- *Persistent rationalization*–our minds appeared eminently willing and able to do *anything* other than actually experience mindful awareness.

They tended to substitute analyzing, discussing, and understanding mindfulness for actually *experiencing* and describing its experience.

- *Impatience, guilt, and perfectionism*–mindful awareness often lasted for only a short period of time. Sleep was so pervasive that it required continual patience, self-forgiveness, and a willingness to give up perfectionism once and for all and be content with waking up when it occurred, practicing split-attention when that happened, and maintaining a gentle, strong intention to keep practicing.
- *Cultural blindness*–we became highly aware of the fact that we live in a culture that appears to be blissfully ignorant of mindful awareness and, at times, apparently dedicated to preserving its absence. It seemed wise to us to create effective and manageable ways of maintaining our solidarity and mutual support.

When Mindfulness is not a Preferred State

In our first weekend, Ravi raised the question as to whether or not there were times in which mindfulness was *not* especially helpful, e.g., when there was a particular task that needed to be accomplished, a report to be written, or when a certain focus needed to be maintained in a discussion or a meeting. Also, he speculated that being mindful might interfere with the enjoyment he experienced of just letting his thoughts run free as he walked. George and Ursula raised the possibility that mindfulness might not be especially helpful when watching a film or reading a book. We agreed to keep an eye on these possibilities as we proceeded, and then we became so interested in the experience of mindfulness

that we didn't bring up the subject again until after the research was completed and the matter was raised by dissertation committee member, Allan Combs. Three months after the completion of the project, I revisited the subject with the co-researchers, and we offered the following opinions.

Ursula declared, "I don't really have any times when I think mindfulness would not be preferable." She shared, however, that there were times when she was singing when, in attempting to be mindful, she would become so aware of what her fingers were doing on the guitar strings that it distracted her from being fully present to the experience.

Ravi wrote the following:

> Worrying about when NOT to be mindful turns out not to be an issue for me. The real issue is remembering to BE mindful. As to it turning up when I don't want it–that just doesn't happen, at least not to me.
>
> As I remember the original conversation, my point was that I actually sometimes enjoy interludes of talking to myself, letting my thoughts run, reviewing where I am- being deliberately away from the present, and in my thoughts, if you like. On my walk this last Sunday, for instance, I deliberately had these periods, and then deliberately had periods of full mindful awareness. That works for me. Both are very nurturing to me. I greatly value both.

George offered these words:

> The only time I could imagine wanting not to be mindful would be at times when I decide to 'suspend disbelief' such as watching a film or reading a novel. If I wanted to be fully involved. I think the reality of being in a cinema or when reading, being fully aware of the book and the process of reading, would inhibit my ability to be lost in imagination.
>
> I have tried this watching TV, I notice that when I am mindful, the size of the screen reduces, and the room is apparent, what is on TV becomes less important, and is easily dismissed.

In response to Allan Comb's inquiry, I wrote the following:

> When I've managed to return to mindfulness in the midst of watching a movie, eating a meal, reading, etc., invariably I've found that the experience is richer, with more depth and texture. It's not a matter of choosing not to be mindful, because I prefer it, but rather it's the case that I just go to sleep after a few seconds or minutes of mindfulness and don't wake up again until a bit later!

While I still value the aim of being mindful as often as possible in daily life, I acknowledge the individual differences that exist between people's experience of mindful awareness, and I respect the fact that, for some people, there are times in which the heightened state of self-awareness that is central to mindfulness is not something that they find helpful in those moments.

Creating the Conditions for Mindful Awareness in Daily Life

During these three months, we learned a lot about a variety of factors that influence our capacity to experience mindful awareness during the activities of our daily lives. These learnings are embedded in the material already presented and are summarized here for clarification. Our learnings gathered most naturally around the following seven themes.

*Understanding Mind*lessness *as well as Mindfulness*

Thus far, the presentation of results has focused on the experience of mindful awareness. We found that it was vital to appreciate and understand the state of being in which we spend most of our waking hours: the state of mind*less*ness, the state of being asleep, on automatic pilot. Mindlessness is so functionally effective, so accepted as the cultural norm, and so reinforced by the

experience of nearly everyone around us, that we slide into sleep without even noticing it and remain there for long periods of time.

There were many signs of falling asleep, including: habitual behaviors such as multi-tasking, compulsive and repetitive responses to the events of our daily lives, a sense of separation from ourselves and from those around us, a sustained anxiety about the future, a sense of helplessness about our lives or an exaggerated sense of our power and capacity to control events, and confusing imagination with reality. We noticed that each of us had particular activities in which we found it easy to stay asleep, including: physical exertion, like fast jogging; eating and drinking, especially in front of television; getting extremely busy and then collapsing afterwards; feeling judgmental or disapproving; talking about mindfulness; multi-tasking; when feeling physical pain; watching television; reading; when facing or trying to solve big problems; when doing routine tasks; when drinking alcohol; when feeling guilty; when feeling anxious; when others are upset. One of the sure and certain signs of mindlessness was the act of blaming someone or something else for how we felt or for what we choose to do; this was *especially* true when we found ourselves blaming our environment or someone in it for our inability to be mindful (e.g., *all these distractions are* preventing *me from being mindful!*)

We noticed that we paid a price for being asleep, e.g., compulsivity, negativity, anxiety, lack of creativity and purposefulness, hopelessness, and lack of motivation. Sometimes this cost was more subtle, in that its effects were culturally approved and even rewarded: e.g., feeling a sense of driven-ness to get

things done, perfectionism, inability to say *No* to further demands at work, a fixation on earning money and being successful, and a conviction that unless certain things happened we couldn't be really happy.

Furthermore, we noticed that when we were caught up in mindlessness, we often sought satisfaction in *other* mindless activity like: drinking, watching television, spending more time working, escapist literature, or eating. Interestingly enough, each of us noticed that when we spent more time being mindful, our compulsion to engage in the compensatory activity eased or even disappeared.

We learned that it was helpful to notice the signs of mindlessness and to *support each other* to notice them; once noticed, we could immediately choose to practice split-attention and return to mindfulness, even if only for a few moments. In this way, we found that *difficult experiences became the occasion for waking up*.

Managing a 2-Phase Process: Waking Up and Extending

We learned that the experience of mindful awareness appears to have two distinct phases: the *initial moment* of awakening, over which we have no direct control, and the *extending* of the experience, in which we can have some participation. This was very helpful to discern.

The initial moment of waking up into mindful awareness, *always* came as a surprise. Suddenly, we would be awake, realizing that (a) we were now awake instead of asleep and (b) we had been asleep since the last time we were awake, *and we could remember that time* when last we were mindful. This experience

always *happened to* us; it was never something we chose to experience. We concluded that, fundamentally, it was an experience of *grace: a serendipitous occurrence over which we had no direct control* However, there *did* appear to be a very obvious connection between our practice of split-attention and the amount of times we spontaneously awakened during the activities of everyday life.

Once we had awakened, then we had the opportunity to *extend* the experience by consciously choosing to *add an element of attention* by focusing our awareness not only on what we were doing in the moment–e.g., typing on a keyboard, reading an email, drawing a diagram, listening to someone, reading, riding in a car, walking, taking a shower–but also on one or two other things, e.g., the feel of breath going in and out of the body, the sounds around us, something within our field of vision. Splitting attention in this way would allow a few more moments or perhaps even minutes of mindfulness.

We consciously adopted this practice for ourselves: when I notice that I've awakened, I will (a) enjoy it, (b) forgive myself if needed for having been asleep again, and (c) extend the moment by continuing to do what I'm doing and splitting my attention. We repeated this throughout the day as we worked, played, and engaged with friends and family. At the end of the three months, the three co-researchers concluded that the waking up phase was happening consistently and in a variety of activities; now they were keen to actively focus on the phase of extending mindful awareness.

Key Elements in the Practice of Split-attention

After a brief introduction to split-attention, the co-researchers became increasingly adept at its practice. We each had our *preferred ways* of dividing our attention, and we all concluded that it was wise to follow a path of least resistance: utilizing the specific practice that came most easily (e.g., seeing, hearing, breathing, etc.). We noticed that, after a while, we needed to *shift* the practice, for our minds seemed quite capable of getting used to whatever we were doing and lull us back to sleep.

It required *patience and self-forgiveness,* to realize that, for the tenth time in a morning, sleep had come again. Eventually, all of us realized that the more we applied split-attention to the moments of high drama in our daily lives–the experiences of painful feelings and negative surprises–the more we *remembered to wake up* in the middle of similar future experiences. This was significantly helpful.

Managing Reactivity and Automaticity

The four of us shared a background of personal development training in which we had learned a lot about noticing the activity of our minds and its impact upon our emotions. We remarked several times during the course of the inquiry about how helpful this background was in terms of recognizing mindlessness when it occurred and isolating some of the thinking and feeling that was part of being asleep. We concluded that people who had engaged in any sort of self-development work would probably find it helpful as they practiced split-attention, and, likewise, the practice of split-attention in support of everyday mindfulness would be very helpful to anyone's work of self-development.

Maintaining Effective Collegiality

We learned that maintaining *effective* collegiality within our group required wisdom and attention to detail. We needed to be sensitive to avoid making group decisions that coerced one of us into doing something that wasn't helpful. For example, some of us found keeping a daily journal very helpful indeed, while others of us would have slipped into mindless obligation if we had attempted to do it. This required us to experiment with agreements that left room for idiosyncratic differences while nevertheless maintaining our sense of solidarity as a group. We were careful to give each other room to speak, and to speak at length, when necessary. At the same time, we recognized the need for long periods of silence when no one had words to offer. We found it extremely helpful to watch each other, and notice when someone was experiencing a moment of mindfulness, for we could *build* on that experience, and often we experienced extended moments in which all four of us were mindfully aware at the same time. That appeared to lend a strength that sustained that experience for minutes at a time.

On the second weekend, we learned how easy it was to slip into a discussion *about* mindfulness that appeared to be useful at the time, but which actually left all of us profoundly dissatisfied. The more aware and expert we became at keeping our focus on the *experience* of being awake and aware, the more effective we became in our mutual support of each other's quest to generate more mindful awareness in the midst of daily life.

Embracing What Happens

We concluded that there appeared to be a relationship– and one that exceeded our ability to understand it–between what exactly happened to us moment-to-moment and our capacity to wake up while experiencing it. We couldn't tell if what was happening was what *needed* to happen in order for us to wake up; what we did realize was that we *were* waking up far more often in response to what happened, *including* things that we disliked, didn't especially want, or even feared. In the face of this experience, we concluded that our daily lives could be trusted to bring what would *work* for our awakening. This awareness was something we all could have acknowledged beforehand as a matter of belief; by the end of the inquiry, we *knew* the truth of it more fully.

Improvising Moment-to-Moment

During our second weekend, St. Augustine's classic dictum–*stand in love and do as you please*–became infused with practical meaning for us. We interpreted this to mean: *be awake and make it up as you go.* We found when we were in a state of mindful awareness, we acted with compassion, wisdom, discernment, and courage. We *trusted* ourselves in that state, and there simply were no rules to follow, no commandments to obey, no belief to salute, and no predetermined course of action to take. Situations in life appeared to *provoke* our response, call us forth, invite or even require us to decide where we stood; and the most trustworthy way of knowing what to do was to split our attention, become mindful, and trust our fundamental goodness.

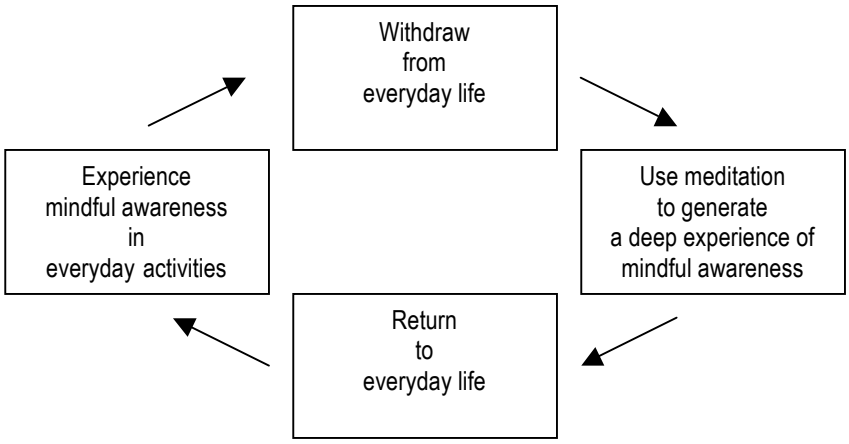
Discussion

The practice of using split-attention to link mindful awareness to our everyday activities appeared to significantly increase our ability to be mindful in the midst of our daily lives. This discussion examines the significance of this result for current mindful awareness training by addressing the following questions: *Why did this work? What are the implications for mindfulness awareness pedagogy? What was not revealed in the study? Where should future research focus its attention?*

A Systems Explanation of the Inquiry's Effectiveness

Conditions that Limit the Effectiveness of Existing Pedagogy

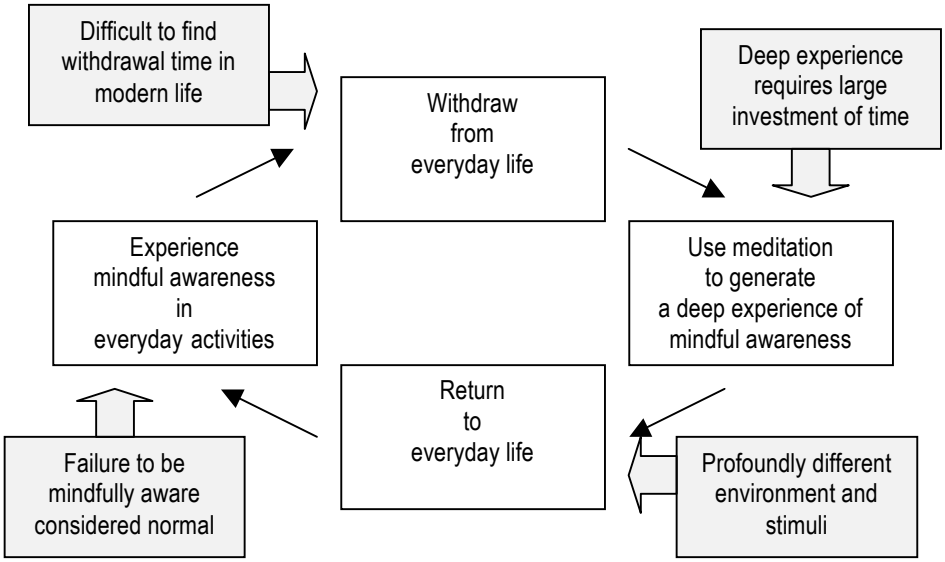
To understand why the practice of split-attention (as utilized in this study) was effective in generating a significant change in our ability to be mindful in the midst of our daily lives, it is helpful to gain the perspective of *systems theory* (Senge, 1990; Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, Roth, & Smith, 1999). The following discussion is grounded in the work of Senge and his collaborators, and it begins with the perspective that existing mindful awareness pedagogy is a *system* of inter-related parts, each of which affects the other.



In this system, people (a) withdraw from their everyday lives–either into a period of formal meditation or into a more prolonged period of retreat–which establishes an environment in which they most easily (b) use meditation to generate an experience of mindful awareness that sticks with them when they (c) return to their everyday activities so that they can (d) experience mindful awareness in the midst of their normal activities and, having the benefits of this experience, be willing to (a) withdraw again for more instruction and experience, etc. These are what Senge and his collaborators called *growing actions*, for each element of the system feeds the next, and, unless some kind of limitation occurs to block the action between the systemic elements, the system continues to expand people's ability to *experience mindful awareness in the activities of everyday life.*

As systems operate in the real world, they run into *limiting conditions* which generate slowing actions that block a system's ability to function. The review of mindful awareness literature identified four particular limiting

conditions affecting existing mindful awareness training. Each element of the system is confronted by one of these conditions:



Meditation-based, retreat-oriented pedagogy has four limiting factors that hinder its effectiveness:

- Our modern, American lifestyle leaves precious little time for daily meditation and makes it virtually impossible for most people to invest the sort of time–weeks and even months–that serious mindfulness practitioners advocate (Kornfield, 2001a; Schwartz, 1995).
- This inability to invest *substantial* time in meditation practice–at home and on retreat–fails to generate the depth of mindful awareness that can sustain itself upon return to normal life. As a result, mindful

awareness is identified with the *experience of meditation* instead of the experience of *daily life.*

- The environment of daily life provides a *profoundly* different environment from the meditative/retreat-oriented environment in which mindful awareness was learned and practiced. Daily life usually presents radically different stimuli that that of a meditative environment (eyes closed, quiet surroundings) or a retreat setting (slow pace, no phones, extensive solitude), and people's capacity for mindful awareness is often unable to survive the transition.
- Level 3 awareness (de Ropp, 1968) is considered *normal* in daily life. When people fail to experience the mindful awareness day-to-day that they experienced in meditation or on retreat, they easily adopt the *consensus consciousness* (Tart, 1986) of the culture. As a consequence, the daily activities of life are regarded as *impediments* to mindful awareness, and mindful awareness is regarded as an *escape* from daily life.

Split-attention Applied to Everyday Activities as an Effective Intervention

When people experience the slowing down of a system, their first response is often to *do more of the growing actions*. After all, this is what made the system work in the first place. When the pedagogical system for mindfulness training isn't producing more mindful awareness in everyday life, people often try to: make more time for more retreats and/or meditation, change their daily activities

to more closely resemble a retreat environment, or find *another* teacher or form of meditation that hopefully will work better.

People fail to realize that it is *pressure* of the *growing actions* that give the *slowing actions* their strength, e.g., the *more* skilled people become at being able to be mindfully aware in a quiet environment, the *less* skilled they are at being mindful aware in a noisy environment. For the system to regain its effectiveness, either (a) the limiting conditions have to be removed or (b) *something new* must be added to the system to give the growing actions *leverage* over the slowing actions. To provide leverage, a *systemic intervention* must *embrace* the limiting conditions instead of ignoring them, and *unite* these limiting conditions with the *fundamental energy and strength* of the system.

The practice of using split-attention to *link* the *experiential energy* of mindful awareness with *daily activities* appeared to provide exactly this sort of leverage in our day-to-day lives: (a) it didn't require additional time for withdrawal into meditation, reflection, or retreat; (b) it provided a way to deepen and extend the experience of mindfulness which, previously, had largely been experienced in meditative withdrawal; (c) it used the *chaos and turmoil* of daily life (Tart, 1986) as the *locus* of mindful awareness–where mindful awareness could be learned and where it could be lived; (d) it provided an ongoing experience of waking up *in the midst* of our daily lives, which generated confidence, curiosity, and courage to keep working at it. Ultimately, I believe that this intervention succeeded for the same reason that the existing pedagogy of mindfulness has succeed for thousands of years in spite of limiting conditions

past, present, and future: the *strength and energy* that drives this particular system of mindful awareness pedagogy is linked to the evolutionary force of life itself (Combs, 1996; Feuerstein, 1995; Wilber, 2000a).

If this systemic analysis is accurate, it offers hope that split-attention, used in this way, could augment mindful awareness training in a way that is simple, direct, and effective. Of course, like all systems, any augmented pedagogy will eventually encounter its own limiting conditions, and further interventions will be required.

Elements of an Augmented Pedagogy for Mindful Awareness

It is possible to augment the current pedagogy of mindful awareness training in a way that: (a) uses its inherent energy and strength, (b) embraces the limiting conditions that are impairing its effectiveness, and (c) delivers an immediate and continuing experience of mindful awareness in the midst of everyday activity. The following suggestions are intended for a small group of people who, following the example of this inquiry, meet face-to-face for enough time to get started, and who then continue with long-distance contact and periodic follow-up meetings. In addition, the following pedagogical elements can be incorporated into existing mindful awareness training in a variety of ways, both by groups and by individuals.

Keeping an Eye on the Goal of Mindful Awareness in Everyday Activities

It is critical to stay focused on the fact that the purpose of mindful awareness training is to be awake and aware *in the midst* of normal, daily

activities. Generating mindful awareness in meditation, on retreat, or other special circumstances is helpful and can lead to important choices in life, however the point of those practices is to become more mindfully aware in day-to-day life. This is simple to understand but difficult to remember. When people regard meditative moments as *relief* from the experience of daily living, the chances are good that they have forgotten the goal.

Engaging the ups and downs of living *with* mindful awareness often produces remarkable results: discernment, courage, and action that really changes things. Over time, learning to become mindful *in the moment* generates a capacity to *embrace* and *learn from* everything that life brings.

Honoring Current Practices while Trusting Individual Inclination

The practice of split-attention is intended to *augment* traditional pedagogy, not replace it. The practice allows people to build upon their experiences of meditation, retreat, and worship by providing a simple and effective exercise to undertake when–probably as a result of their traditional practices–they find themselves waking up during their daily lives.

It is possible, however, that this new practice may expose for people the fact that they have pursued other practices purely out of habit, or because they felt obligated. The effectiveness of split-attention may draw people away from practices that, in their best judgment, aren't serving their needs. This provides an opportunity for people to trust their inclinations, sharpen their purposes, and take a stand for what most serves their interests.

Trusting Curiosity and Inquiry

We realized that, throughout the inquiry, we were motivated fundamentally by a spirit of *inquiry*. We followed our *curiosity* where it led, and it pulled us along: we experimented with different points of focus for our divided attention; we applied the practice to a wide range of daily activities; and *all* of us started waking up *often* in the midst of difficulties and painful emotional experiences–moments in which we had typically been asleep for years.

Trusting people's curiosity, and encouraging *them* to trust their own curiosity, keeps responsibility for learning and for growth where it belongs: in their hands, instead of in the hands of a teacher, a guru, an authority. People learn to value their own way of approaching mindful awareness and to take it at their own pace. This appears to generate a significant sense of self-confidence and sensitivity to the rhythms of one's own learning process.

Utilizing Split-attention in the Moments of Waking Up

It appeared that *each moment* that someone *thought about* using split-attention was *itself* a moment of *self-remembering*, a moment of *waking up.* In those moments, each of us tried to use split-attention *while carrying on* with whatever activity we were doing. Sometimes we *immediately forgot* and went *back to sleep.* Often, especially as we became more skilled, we remembered to split our attention and experience what happened as a result. The practice was simple, effective, and easily forgotten within a few seconds or minutes; but another moment of *waking up* would arrive later on.

The practice is so simple and, in its own way, so humbling (in that minutes, hours, or days can elapse between waking moments), that it is easy to

dismiss as too difficult or too dull. Sticking with it, however, appears to generate important results.

Asking if People are Mindful When it Appears that They are Not

This was a critical element of our group's experience. Given the tendency of human beings, especially in a group, to do *anything* other than be mindfully aware, it was important to honor the opinion of the person who, in a given moment, was the first to notice that we were talking *about* mindfulness instead of being mindful. This may be the single most important measurement of group maturity and strength; once someone *notices and asks* if someone is awake, *everyone* tends to wake up and have the opportunity to practice split-attention to extend the moment.

Alternating Cycles of Experience and Sharing-as-Description

We spent 95% of our three-month inquiry in the setting of our daily lives,at home and at work. We wrote in journals, shared them online, and conducted long-distance conference calls on a weekly basis. At the conclusion of the inquiry, we unanimously voted to continue the phone calls on a bi-weekly basis and to journal as we individually felt the need.

This cycle of experiencing mindful awareness during our daily lives and then talking about our experience with each other appeared to be mutually reinforcing. We found that is was critical, however, to *share* our experiences and not *discuss* them, to *describe* our experiences and not *explain* them, to *tell the stories of our experiences* and not theorize about them.

Some Remaining Questions

There were many questions raised directly and indirectly by the results of this inquiry. The most important ones include the following:

Regarding an Individual's Experience of Split-attention Practice

- Will this practice be effective for people who have not had as much experience as the co-researchers with handling the workings of the human mind?
- Will this practice be effective for people who are unfamiliar with the practice of meditation?
- What is the long-term (12-18 months) impact of this practice on an individual's life, and how effective are individuals in sustaining this practice for that length of time?

Regarding a Group's Experience of Split-attention Practice

- What is the experience of a group of people who work together and use this practice to encounter situations in their work?
- What are the most effective ways for a group of people to mutually support each other over a long period of time (12-18 months).
- What is the experience of a group who are strangers to one another when they begin this practice?

- What is the experience of groups that have significant diversity of culture? Race? Political or religious opinions? Groups in which open conflict is present?

Regarding the Application of Split-attention Practice by Teachers

- What is the most effective training for people familiar with this practice who wish to offer it to others?
- How would master teachers of mindful awareness incorporate this practice into their work? How would they amend or expand this process based on their knowledge and experience?

Suggestions for Further Research

The questions above suggest many opportunities for research. The opportunities that I think are the most critical are:

- To explore the long-term experience of individuals who learn this practice; over the course of several years, does the practice of split-attention sustain itself in their experience? What are the elements of practice that make it easier or more difficult to sustain? What are the limiting conditions that arise systemically from augmenting existing mindful awareness pedagogy with this practice; what further pedagogical augmentations arise from this discovery?

- To involve master-level teachers of mindful awareness in a collaborative effort to utilize this practice in their existing pedagogies, and explore the results of this effort in the lives of their students.
- To explore the experience of *existing working groups* –in both the for-profit and non-profit sectors of society–who use this practice collectively in the conduct of their affairs and the pursuit of their mission.

Reorienting our Relationship with Reality

Mindful awareness reorients our relationship with the day-to-day reality of our lives. This is probably the ultimate benefit of being awake and aware moment-by-moment in our daily existence, and it why pedagogies for mindful awareness have quietly assumed a place of honor throughout history. As far as we know, being awake and aware in a given moment is a uniquely *human* possibility, and when this possibility happens–in a particular moment of a particular human being–we suddenly see our world with new eyes and a more open heart. We escape less and engage more, and we fear less and love more.

Using split-attention to link mindful awareness to everyday activities expands the pedagogy that, for thousands of years, has enabled human beings to shift their relationship with the *reality* of their lives. It is *this shift* that changes everything.

> There is no God but Reality.
> To seek Him elsewhere

Is the action of the Fall. (Tart, 1986, p. 21)

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APPENDIX

Definitions

- *Mindful awareness, awake, awake and aware, mindfulness,* a *mindful state,* a *mindful state of awareness, mindfully aware,* and *being mindful.* These terms will be used synonymously. In general, they refer to a feeling of unusual clarity of experience and a sense of presence. Specifically, they refer to any one of the following experiences, or any combination of these experiences: (a) a clear, lucid quality of awareness of the everyday experiences of life; (b) a clear quality of awareness as applied to deeper and more subtle processes of the mind; (c) an awareness of being aware, in which some part of the mind "witnesses" or remains aware of the ongoing experience of life; and (d) a continuous and precise awareness of the process of being aware (Tart, 1990). Mindfulness, in all its forms, has a quality to it that is similar to the experience of awakening from sleep: a quality of lucidity, alertness, brightness, and dimensionality.
- *Split-attention.* In this practice, people deliberately split off a small part of their awareness which they then use to monitor the experience they are having (Burton, 1995; Ouspensky, 1977; Tart, 1994). It supports self-observation, and, when applied in the moment to everyday activities, it opens the possibility of mindful awareness.

Plan for the 90-Day Inquiry

Guidelines for Designing the Inquiry

Tart mentioned that there was really only one "rule" to be followed in designing exercises to promote mindfulness in everyday life: "to be *mindful yourself in all things and experimentally try various practices to help others to be mindful* (1994, p. 213). His other design guidelines included:

- Regard all exercises as exercises, not rules to live by.
- Practice the exercises, don't just read about them and form a judgment–most of them sound silly to the intellectual mind and must be experienced to have value.
- Remember that exercises only work temporarily. The mind adjusts, novelty helps. Most, if not all, will lose their beneficial aspects over time: a few minutes to a few years.
- Do an exercise for an interval of time and then consciously stop it. We can wear out an exercise by using it for too long
- The mechanics of the exercise are not the same thing as the mindfulness it can induce. Just going through the motions isn't being mindful.
- A moderate amount of tension (physical, intellectual, and emotional) can help by intensifying awareness. Too much tension, however, activates automatic defense mechanisms and induces automaticity instead of mindfulness.

From my own experience with the practice of split-attention during the 18 months prior to the inquiry, I added the following guidelines:

- By practicing *split attention*, link mindful awareness to activities that are fundamental to everyday life–activities like sitting, walking, reading, writing, driving, eating, drinking, and listening - so that the daily experience of these activities *becomes the occasion* for spontaneously waking up into mindfulness.
- By consciously *continuing* the practice of split attention when you spontaneously experience mindful awareness, *extend* these spontaneous experiences.

Before the inquiry, I conducted a 10-day exploration of the split-attention practice with three colleagues from my doctoral cohort colleagues. On the basis of that experience, I added the following guidelines:

- Since the experience of mindfulness appears to be self-generating, in mysterious and unpredictable ways, there needs to be (a) enough structure to provide a common experience and (b) enough freedom for participants trust and follow their own intuition and instincts about how best to proceed.
- There need to be structures that provide a sense of group commitment and support, including ways to communicate about our ongoing experience of mindful awareness.

- Since (a) there is a strong tendency to become attached to the experience and to regard your life as "less" when you're not mindful and (b) to be very difficult to experience mindful awareness for more than a few moments at a time, participants need to be reminded to be patient and self-forgiving as they practice.
- Since mindfulness seems to generalize to other activities in our daily life, we need to keep an eye open for this happening.
- Since the experience of mindfulness sometimes yielded to insight about oneself, others, about the passage of life itself, breaking down the conceptual structures that otherwise would have remained in place and opening the way to a broader, more holistic understanding of things, we need to have structures that allow for catching these insights as they arise without making them the focus of mindful activity.
- Since a sense of well-being, and gratitude for the opportunity to experience it, seems to rise on its own as we experience mindfulness, we need room to experience this well-being and express our gratitude for it.
- Since experiences of mindful awareness seem to open us to reality as it is, as opposed to how we thought it was, and to bring a sense of connection to reality as it is, we need structures that honor this paradigm-shifting activity.

Inquiry Checklist

I used the following checklist to guide my actions during the 90-day inquiry.

Preparation

- Set up Smartgroups.com web site and post the following documents to inform and support co-researchers:

  Invitation Letter.
  Consent Form.
  SAS and SELF-R scales, in printable and electronic form.
  An Overview of the Inquiry Project.
  Background and Context.
  Qualitative Research–an Explanation.
  How Participants were Selected.
  Data that will be Collected.
  Encountering and Analyzing the Data.
  A Detailed Description of the Inquiry.
  Bibliography.

- Open conference calling account with Saveonconferences.com.
- Send Invitation letter.
- Receive Consent Forms.

First Weekend

- Set up recorder and test the equipment.
- Make sure logistical arrangements are in place: location, clothing, transportation.
- Ask for shares regarding: *Why did I want to participate in this inquiry and what did I hope to gain?*

- Explain nature of qualitative research, the role of inquiry, and introduce the core question: *What happens when people link mindfulness with everyday activities?*
- Present outline of the Inquiry, discuss, and make any changes desired by the group.
- Explain our roles: all of us are equal participants in the inquiry; all teachers and students of one another; together we will decide the specifics of our schedule for the weekends within the general outline already established; they will each lead the group in one of the six practices and support the group during the weekend to keep practicing; I will be responsible for logistics, timing, and the gathering of recorded data.
- Explain the practice of split-attention and its application to six daily activities; each participant chooses one of the practices to teach the group.
- Present the fundamental practice of the inquiry as containing three simple steps which are constantly repeated::
    1. When you spontaneously *wake up* in the midst of your daily life, utilize split-attention while you continue to do whatever it is that you're doing.
    2. Gather and record data in your journal regarding these experiences.
    3. Share your data with the group.

- Clarify that my *instructor's* role has just ended, and that from now on we are equal contributors to the process, responsible for following our curiosity, sharing our experiences and opinions, and collaboratively deciding all matters pertaining to the conduct of the inquiry.
- Mention that each person has final approval of any presentation of findings that pertain to that person's life, that their three identities will be kept confidential, and that, after feedback from them on all parts of the dissertation, will make the final decision about conclusions from the study.
- Handle any outstanding questions and make all decisions together regarding the conduct of the inquiry throughout the weekend and the rest of the 90 days.
- During the weekend, make sure that we (a) practice all six split-attention activities and (b) share the experiences. Make sure all have time to share and follow the direction of the group conversation. Be surprised.
- Make written observations of the process throughout the weekend.
- Before concluding the weekend, make sure that online protocols are in place, dates for conference calls are set, and that we have clear agreements about practicing split-attention, keeping journals, and posting journals online.

Four Weeks of Everyday Living

- Transcribe recordings from the first weekend and begin coding the material.
- Test recording equipment for the phone calls, record each call, and immediately transcribe the recording.
- Record observations after each call and post observations online.
- In each call, make sure everyone has room to share, follow the themes, etc.
- Email list of coding categories to co-researchers prior to the weekend.

Second Weekend

- Handle logistical preparations.
- Suggest sharing regarding: *What is it like for me to get back together with our group and what do I want to gain from this weekend?*
- Reflect on experiences of the past four weeks, using coding categories as helpful, and receive feedback on the categories to see what other perspectives emerge.
- Look forward to the next eight weeks and make agreements about what we will do in our practice, our journaling, and our conference calls

Eight More Weeks of Everyday Living

- Continue the pattern of journaling and phone calls.

- Transcribe material from second weekend and keep encountering the material.
- Share emerging understandings with the group for reflection and group learning.
- Stay current with each other regarding experiences, evaluating learnings as we go.
- Complete case study drafts and email to group before the closing meeting.

Closing Meeting

- Receive shares about case study drafts.
- Complete the evaluation of the inquiry.
- Look ahead and decide what to do, individually and collectively.
- Make arrangements for group review of dissertation as it is written.

Invitation Letter Sent to Co-researchers

The following letter was sent to the three people who became the co-researchers for the inquiry. Collaboratively, we made decisions before and during the inquiry that changed some of the original plans for the inquiry that are reflected in the letter.

Dear _____,

I am delighted to formally invite you to participate with me and five other like-minded people in the month-long Inquiry into Everyday Mindfulness about which we have already spoken. As you know, this inquiry is the research project for my doctoral dissertation, and I am looking forward to be a full participant, with you, in this experience.

Together, as a group of 3-4 inquirers, we will explore - in our actual, daily experience–the following question: *What happens when people link mindfulness to everyday activities in their lives?* In this letter, I want to give you all the information you need to make a clear decision as to whether or not participating in this inquiry is right for you at this time in your life. Below is a full description of the inquiry experience, the commitment that is required of you, the costs involved, the permissions you need to give, and the support that is available to you during and after the inquiry.

The Format of the Inquiry

- **Opening weekend–Aug. 8-10, 2003**–we will meet at my home in Nevada City, CA, from dinner on Friday night through lunch on Sunday. This will allow you to fly on Friday and return home by Sunday evening. Before you leave, I will call with a weather report and a short list of what to bring with you. You will participate as an equal partner in our group of 3-4 as we make decisions about conducting our inquiry, teach and support each other in the six "linking practices" in which we join mindful awareness to activities that are fundamental to our everyday lives, and as we prepare ourselves for the heart of the inquiry: four weeks of everyday living in our own environments.
- **Four weeks of everyday living–Aug 11–Sep. 5, 2003–**you go about your daily life: (a) noticing each time that you spontaneously "wake up" into mindfulness, and (b) practicing extending this experience by engaging in one of the linking activities as you continue whatever you're doing at the time. To preserve your experiences during this period, you keep a daily journal of your mindful experiences, and, once a week, you send these reflections (keeping private, of course, any parts that you do not wish to share) to me via email. In addition, you can share anything you wish with our group in an online space that will serve as a point of contact and mutual support for us. Twice a week, you will have a coaching interview with me by telephone in

which you can share whatever you wish, ask any questions that you have, and respond to any questions that I have as our inquiry proceeds. Also, once during this period of time, you and I will have an telephone interview in which you coach me in my experience of mindfulness during these four weeks.

- **Closing weekend–Sep. 5-7, 2003**–we will meet again at my home, with the same schedule as the opening weekend. We will share extensively about our experiences, examine together the data thus far generated in our inquiry, glean our learnings about the linking practices and about everyday mindfulness, and also have time to each make decisions about the next steps in our lives.

Your Commitment

Because there are only 3-4 of us who will be involved in the inquiry and who will be the source of data for this study, it is imperative that each of us commit ourselves fully to all parts of the inquiry. Specifically this means that you will commit yourself to the following activities:

- Be present for and participate fully in both weekends of the inquiry.
- Participate fully in the four-week section of the inquiry that occurs in your own environment: doing your best to monitor your experiences of mindfulness, aiming to chronicle those experiences in a daily journal, sharing that journal (as you choose to share it) with the rest of the group in an online environment (this means that you have to

communicate the contents of your journal via computer, and participating in the coaching interviews by telephone (four 30-minute calls during this period of time).

- Participate in a 60-minute 4-week Follow Up call a month after the closing weekend.

Costs Involved

I am grateful for the significant amount of time and effort that you will be contributing to this inquiry, and I want to keep the costs of participating as low as possible for you. One of the reasons I am conducting the two weekends in my home is that it is more cost effective to do so. (The other reason is that it is more an "everyday" environment than a hotel or conference center.) If you will bear the cost of getting yourself to the Sacramento airport, I will handle the cost of your transportation to my home, your stay (three people can stay in our home and three at a nearby hotel–let me know if you have a preference), and your meals (all of which will be in our home). I will initiate and bear the cost of our coaching calls during the four-week period between weekend, and you will cover the cost of your online connection and posting of your journal and any other communication that you initiate with the other participants in our group.

The Permissions you need to Give

I give you my word that everything you say or write will be held in complete confidence. When I publish the findings of our inquiry in my doctoral dissertation, the content of what we said, wrote, and experienced will be shared in

a way that preserves the confidentiality of all participants. In addition, if there are things that you want to share with me that you want to keep private from the rest of the participants, you may do so.

Our written contributions will be in the form of online communication, so they are easily preserved. I will record our group conversations on each weekend and the coaching sessions we have by telephone, and these will be transcribed. In this way, all of our written and spoken communication will be available for the qualitative analysis that will be part of my doctoral research. I will share my findings and conclusions with you during the inquiry itself (at the closing weekend) and afterwards, when the research is completed. You will have an opportunity to amend, correct, and/or comment upon anything that I write about your experience. (In qualitative research, your approval of my presentation of your experience is one of the steps that insures validity.)

Enclosed is a copy of the *Bill of Rights for Participants in Research* that presents your rights which will be protected at all times in the course of this research. By signing the enclosed Consent Form, you are giving the permissions required for your participation in this inquiry.

Support Available for You

I am available by phone and email throughout the inquiry and afterwards for any discussions that you want to have.

Contact me regarding any questions or concerns that you have. When you know that you're ready to participate in this inquiry, please sign the Consent Form and return it directly to me. Thank you for considering being part of this inquiry. I eagerly await your response.

Roy Whitten

11197 Via Vista, Nevada City, CA 95959

Telephone: 530-265-3643;

Email: wroywhitten@msn.com

Consent Form Signed by Co-researchers

The following consent form was signed by each co-researcher prior to the commencement of the inquiry.

Consent Form

Roy Whitten, a doctoral candidate at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, is conducting a study regarding the experience of everyday mindfulness. Participation involves: attending two weekend conferences; practicing mindful awareness for four weeks in the midst of your everyday life; keeping a daily mindfulness journal during these four weeks; sharing what you choose to share of this journal with Roy Whitten via email; sharing what you choose to share with the other participants in the inquiry via an online forum; participating in six coaching telephone interviews (maximum 30 minutes each); and participating in a final telephone interview four weeks after the second weekend (maximum one hour). All interviews and conference sessions will be recorded via audio tape. There also may be video recordings and pictures taken during the weekend conferences.

In all of these activities, your participation is completely voluntary and, at all times during the study, you have the right to answer any question and to raise any question that you choose. All audio and video recordings, and any pictures taken during the study, will be stored securely in Roy Whitten's possession. All contributions will be given pseudonyms, and a list of names linked with

pseudonyms will be locked in a location separate from the data; if anyone were to come upon this study's data, participants' names would not be available with this data. At this time, there is no intended use for this material other than transcribing the audio portions for written analysis of data. If at any time in the future, Roy Whitten wishes to use a portion of your recorded material or a picture that includes you, he will first obtain your written permission for each usage that he intends. All data will be destroyed after five years. Any presentation of written material from this study will completely protect the identity of the author of the material. Findings will be presented in general form and, where specific citations are used, they will be chosen with the aim of protecting confidentiality.

In a doctoral study, there can be no guarantee of direct benefit, and no guarantee is offered. That said, you will engage in a practice of linking mindful awareness to activities that are fundamental to your everyday life, and–as someone experienced with mindfulness–you are familiar with the benefits of mindful experience, and you also know that the risks involved are minimal and no greater than those encountered in daily life. You can expect deep feelings during the process, including perhaps unpleasant ones, and you can also expect awarenesses, insights, and thought-provoking experiences that may provide significant benefit for you during and after the study. In addition, there is the possibility that your participation may create significant benefit for others who read about and participate themselves in future experiences such as this one.

Roy Whitten will be available before, during, or after the study to talk about your concerns, and to facilitate referrals to supervisors, consultants, or

therapists if such a need should arise. Psychologist John Hoover (licensed professional psychologist) in Knoxville, Tennessee is the primary referral, and Roy Whitten will assist you in finding a psychologist in your area if needed). Roy Whitten can be contacted at (*telephone number*).

You may withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. In addition, if you have concerns or are dissatisfied at any time with any part of this study, you may report your concerns–anonymously if you wish–to the Chair of the Human Research Review Committee, California Institute of Integral Studies, 1453 Mission St., San Francisco, CA, 94103, or by telephone at 415-575-6100.

By signing below, you give your consent to participate in this study.

I, _____, consent to participate in the study of everyday mindfulness conducted by Roy Whitten of the California Institute of Integral Studies. I have received a copy of this consent form, and I understand that my confidentiality will be protected within the limits of the law.

_____

Signature Date

If you would like to receive a written summary of the results of the study, please provide an address where it can be sent to you:

_____

Street City Zip

Sample Data Source Documents

Transcripts

From the First Weekend

This conversation took place on Saturday morning of the first weekend. George was taking us for a ride in his car in order to practice split-attention in that environment. We returned from the journey and, while sitting in the car, began reflecting on the experience before trying it again.

George
I don't think I'll say anything now, just ask you to listen . . .

(long silence with car running)

(laughter)

Ravi
There's a noise back here for you to attend to . . .

I found that really quite difficult, because I tried the looking out of the window at the sides, and it's so familiar around here to me, there's not much to keep my interest, so my mind trips in quite quickly and starts thinking about things, like, you know, the things on the street remind me of things. So, I found it quite difficult to stay with it . . .

Roy
So it sounds like [your mind] does two things. You know, we're talking about the mind as opposed to mindfulness–that's what we're dealing with–and the first thing it does is it looks and sees and evaluates and says, "I know this." And then starts reaching for other associations . . .

Ravi
Yes.

Roy
And somehow, the split attention needs to be practiced at that point to keep the mind from doing it. You've got to occupy the mind somehow, so that it doesn't take us away like that.

Ravi

And looking out of the window didn't do it for me . . . I quite easily glaze out when it's all going past at a constant speed. It's sort of almost soporific, and then I'll see something, sometimes I'll just see something that's attractive or an unusual color, or a strange (unintelligible), and I just won't evaluate it, and that will help. But much of the time it will be something that when I notice it, and I'm not soporific, I have an association.

Roy

I think that will keep happening, in my experience, until we consciously force the mind to pay attention to something else as well. That's where you need to add the second thing.

Ursula

My experience is just wanting to challenge the second thing. If you've got one second thing, and I had that because I had it doing walking as well, where I was noticing what I was feeling, and then listening, and then I swapped, and started noticing my breathing, and then go back to one of the other . . . it's almost like you have a sort of limited . . . you know it's not that interesting listening to your breathing . . . and so then, then I was losing focus between the different senses really. And here as well . . . I was noticing my breathing . . . I was doing the sitting as well, and listening, and doing the peripheral vision thing.

What seemed to be happening is that my mind is just longing to glaze out, blob out, to just kind of go into that . . . just let my thoughts run . . . just longing to go on a kind of reverie . . .

(agreement)

. . . you know, like "enough of this mindfulness" . . . just bring it back all the time, means that it hasn't had a chance to sort of wonder about things . . . it's just being with as much of the experience as I can . . . well, you know wandering off again, and then keep bring it back . . . it really feels like it wants to go on a long . . .

Roy

Well, it's really what the mind does. It makes associations. That's its functions. It associates, associates, associates. How about if we take another drive?

Mine's real similar. I go in and out of it. It's like I'll be really present, and then all of a sudden I'll realize, "Oh, I've been thinking about, Is that car going to come out and hit us or not hit us."

As we drive this time . . . did any of you do the peripheral vision thing?

Ursula
Un huh . . .

Roy
Well try that this time. You look ahead, but also notice what's going by on either side as it disappears from your vision, to the right and to the left, and then, as–not if, but when you find your mind has taken you away, it seems to me that that's critical to all of this–this is not about not letting that happen, but when it happens–you notice it's happened, and they you add another function, like keep seeing what you're seeing, but also add the hearing. And another good thing to always go to, which you mentioned, Ursula., is go to . . . always add the breathing . . . what's the feel of my breath right now while I keep watching or while I keep listening.

So, since we're in the car, it makes sense to keep your seeing always going–you don't want to hit anything–but at the same time to add . . . and you've been focusing a lot on listening . . . so try that . . . but if that's not enough, then also add the feel of your breath going in and out.

George
So breathing helps . . .

Roy
And feeling your breath . . .

George
Feeling the breath . . . that puts me very much into the moment . . .

Roy
Let's play with that for a few minutes.

George
Let me also mention the specific sounds, because drawing our attention to that may help. Who knows. That's the sound of the fan whirring . . .

Roy
Well, that's just another sound to listen to

George
It would be wouldn't it . . .

(laughter)

Roy

Again, while we're doing this, I don't think, at least for me, the aim isn't to somehow hit somehow some sustained or lasting state, as much as it is to have an experience of popping into mindfulness and seeing what it's like . . .

(drive, taken in silence)

George

That was very different! Yeah, I stayed much more aware. I was allowing myself to see the things out of the side of my head, and suddenly, I just wanted to slow down . . . slow down . . . rather than "get there," just enjoy "being there" . . . I slowed down (laughs) . . .

Roy

Slowed down . . .

George

Yes . . . (tone of wonder in voice)

Ravi

Yes, it seemed like a meditation. At one stage I just wanted to close my eyes . . . (silence)

The problem I think for me is that I've already judged the likelihood of me having a particularly pleasurable or exciting experience while sitting in a car is so miniscule that it isn't worth my attention . . .

(laughter)

Roy

You're screwed before you start.

Ravi

It's really hard. I can see that if I'm going to get anything out of sitting in a car, I'm going to have to do something with that. It just seems so much so pointless, you know, like you said . . .

Roy

Yeah, a strong judgment already has hold of you . . .

Ravi

Yes, that sitting in the car is inherently boring . . . (laughs) . . . I've got real problems here!

Roy

Well, it's a great observation of how the mind's conclusions prevent us from having an experience in the moment . . . a great observation.

Ravi

I thought the best I could do was sort of meditate a bit, get quiet.

Roy

Boy, it really helps to have some awareness of ones mind, doesn't it, to do this sort of work, to know about it's judgments, its this and its that . . . our Life Training work has really been helpful with that. That's interesting.

Ursula

I did close my eyes, partly because the sun was so bright I was having difficulty doing the vision thing. And what I really noticed when I closed my eyes is how much more I heard, and also I was really aware of the movement of the car, and because I think before I wasn't at all conscious when we were turning a corner, now I could feel my body move, and I could tell the curves we were doing, and also the warmth of the sun on my face–I was much more . . . more in the realm of touch than of vision.

And I felt very–you know like George–sort of a bit slow, I sort of relaxed into it. I think I was trying to hard before, you know, get everything just so . . . and I wasn't breathing. So, when I closed my eyes, all of a sudden I was much more interested, and much more mindful of the whole physical experience of being the car, and what was surround me . . . and it was interesting as well actually, because I couldn't breath properly when I was trying to do the outside thing and the listening. My breathing disappeared, and, as soon as I was back again, I could do the breathing and the feeling . . .

George

You didn't notice it or you stopped breathing?

Ursula

Yes, I didn't seem to be breathing as freely. My breath was sort of withheld somehow.

Roy

I'm struck by your phrase of "trying too hard." The moments I had in it where I was trying to do this, trying to do that, and then there was a moment when I just relaxed into it, and the whole thing was much easier than I'd been trying to make it.

And there's a delicious slowing-down–the phrase you used, George–a delicious slowing down, where it all becomes so incredibly . . . sensual . . . oh delicious . . .

and often my mind will come in and say, Oh you can't have too much of this . . . you're going to blow up or melt into a puddle

Ursula
(laughter)

Roy
. . . or you know . . . you can't take too much of this now. But there's just a lot of . . . in those moments, when it clicks in, it really is lovely, and easy. Sort of makes me wonder what I'm doing with the rest of my life. (laughter)

Well, shall we go back inside?

(agreement)

From a Conference Call

Conference Call 2–Nov. 26

(Hellos, description of weather)

Roy
It's good to hear your voices. Shall we start with everybody just having some time to share out . . . George, would you like to continue?

George
The morning, actually, I didn't have a very easy day. It's been very hectic and things going all over the place for me today as far as work is concerned, sitting here and dealing with it has been quite a struggle. Remaining mindful during the day was quite difficult to achieve. I tried it several times and my mind was just going off onto work issues and dealing with things.

The day started really well. I was left to take the children to the bus. (My wife) was out, and it was my job to take them up there. Getting the children to the bath has to be done, you know, get them down time, that works, and the children tend to be a bit late, and I sometimes get nervous about getting them there on time, and I sat at my desk and became mindful and slowed time down. It slowed down so much.

You know how long a minute takes to go if you're mindful of the time. (laughter) It's lovely. It *really* slowed down, and I could sense the seconds passing. And suddenly there was all the time in the world. It was like it all opened out into a different dimension, from sort of rushing around–I got into rushing around during

the day–but in that time, it was really lovely, and I write about it in my journal . . . the space that was created, just in slowing–it appeared to slow right down.

You know, we talked about it on weekend, and getting some different space.

Roy
It's like the time slows down and you open up.

George
Yes, very much like that. I open up, I allow it to just be, and I notice, notice the time. Suddenly it all becomes so much easier. I can sense it now, actually, just talking about it . . . time slowing down, the seconds . . . slow . . . really when you're there with them. They're not fast . . . (laughter) . . . minutes are an age, if you're really there with it.

And, instead of galloping around the house, chipping people, and making sure all was done, it was relaxed, and it just happened. And then, everything else happened in the day, which was entirely different.

(laughter)

Roy
This is the kind of "slit your wrist" moments, when I have these–you know, moments when everything is just so exquisite, you know, and the pain goes away, and the struggle goes away, and the pain just evaporates, and what is left is this amazing, amazing moment.

George
Yes . . . you may have read my journal . . . and that sense of time being in _____ Abbey on Saturday, sitting there–and thinking about it, it may have been the most peaceful moment I've ever had in my life. It was quite extraordinary, because there was no sense of anything but that moment, just being there in that moment, people coming in. I mean, I might have been annoyed by the clattering of people's heels at one time. My mind might have been off somewhere else, but I just stayed there, in the moment of it. It was amazingly peaceful.

I think there is something about the quality of the space as well–it was a large Abbey, and it was quiet, and it was sort of a contemplative space . . .

Roy
Yeah, but you were in that space, not having that moment, before you had the moment, right?

George
That's right, but the moment lasted almost an hour . . .

Roy

That's wonderful. But, what I was trying to suggest was that it wasn't the physical location . . . because you were in that location before you moved into this mindful space . . .

George

Yes . . .

Roy

And so it was actually the moving into the mindful space that created this huge moment.

George

Exactly! But I was there because (my wife) was leading a day, and the topic for the day was "Being Present to the Moment." That's something she decided well before I got involved in this, so it was another coincidence. We started off with some thinking about it . . . it was just lovely going into the abbey and being there. I enjoyed that very much. Truly peaceful place. And that sense of gratitude for the things that are in the moment, those people, and those things that are in the moment become the most important thing of all. *They* are what is important. Those things in the moment. And it's–I felt immense gratitude for them, those people there, those two or three people and the space . . . .wonderful . . . so, yeah, I'll look forward to some more of that.

Roy

I believe that that quality of experience is actually available at every minute. It's what comes with being mindful.

George

I'd like to think so. I think you're right. I had a sense of it this morning, when I was thinking about the time . . . and then I had the rest of the day . . . overwhelming.

(laughter)

Ravi

If I could just add something to that. I think that where I've got to is that I really resonated with what George put in his journal about feeling generally peaceful as a result of having more interludes of mindfulness in the day.

(agreement)

And even–I don't know if you got this George–dealing with difficult situation, challenging situations, actually seems a bit easier, at least for a while.

George
Definitely! Definitely

Ravi
Even though I wasn't mindful at the time, it just had–the fact that there was more mindfulness in my life–actually had an impact even on the difficult moments. And, just to say something about what you said there, Roy, I mean I'm not at a stage at the moment where I find it easy to believe that it's possible to be mindful in every moment . . . it's so far away as to seem unobtainable . . .

Roy
I'm at a point where it's easy to believe it, it's just not easy to do it!

(laughter)

I don't think that's progress, but back to you, Ravi.

(laughter)

Ravi
I've said in my journal that I believe there are times when I deliberately choose not to be. I mentioned about when I finished this weekend course, I had an opportunity to walk back to the main station, and I decided that I wanted to use that time to sort of slot my thoughts into place. I mean, some people say that dreaming has that function–of actually trying to sort out the various weird things that have gone through your mind in the day–to get some kind of order. And I often get the sense that I'd like to do that with some of my time. To me, it's as useful as mindfulness in a different way.

George
May I ask you, Ravi, where do you go to when you're doing this.

Ravi
Into my head.

(laughter)

I mean, I just go into my thoughts. I'll be walking along, and I'll get snatches of what I'm working through . . .

George
So you won't be aware of anything around you . . .

Ravi
I'm aware of things around me . . .

George

You *are* aware . . .

Ravi

But I just want to use - my intention is to see what comes up, and sometimes I'll stop and write something down, to try and get a sense of what the key things were that I took away from that course, or whatever it happens to be. Or, I'm in the car sometimes, and I'll talk to myself and try to sort out what's in my head and what's confusing me. Or in the early morning, that's a very good time for me; I often get my best ideas in the early morning, and I'll deliberately lie there just waiting to see what comes out.

(silence)

Roy

Let me ask you a question about that, Ravi, because, it's been really intriguing to me. I think it's a very important category–the category of "is it important to have times to not be mindful." Just because it's so easy to fall in–because the experience of mindfulness is just so engaging . . .

Ravi

Yes.

Roy

. . . it's so easy to lead to, OK, we should be there all the time.

(agreement)

. . . so I think it's a really important category to have. And, I have had times where I have tried to not be mindful . . .

(laughter)

. . . and the experience was, I because more mindful. It's like I couldn't *choose* not to be mindful. However, of course, if I choose not to split my attention, it happens just fine–being mindless, you know–I just kind of spin off into other things . . .

(agreement)

. . . so, my question for you was, what's your experience of that? Do you consciously choose not to be mindful? Or . . .

Ravi

I think it's a more positive thing I'm trying to describe . . . .consciously, positively choosing the time to sort out my thoughts . . . now whether that's mindful or not, I'm not sure . . . but it's a different state, that's for sure. And I mean, it's true, that even in that state, I'll slip into mindfulness, you know, for short periods, and then out again, and that's fine.

Ursula

Ravi, is it similar to when you're writing in your journal? Because, often, when I'm doing my journal, it's a way of organizing my thoughts about something, or about mindfulness . . .

Ravi

Yes.

Ursula

. . . but at the same time I am, sometimes, mindful, because I can hear my fingers on the keys . . .

Ravi

Yes! That's right. You're right . . . and actually often writing things down is something that I find incredibly helpful, just to sort my ideas and thoughts out. I don't know, it may be just a different dimension, rather than any way of a kind of opposite of mindfulness. I just don't know.

Roy

It would be interesting to keep our eye on it, because I think you're really on to something . . . I just can't put my grasp around it. I'll work on practicing it myself . . . so for you, it's just kind of a choice to focus on a subject of thought at hand.

Ravi

Yes. Well, I suppose the other thing to say about it is that it's another form of really giving focus to something, focus and intention and attention. And I suppose that's not to far away from mindfulness, so you can be mindful on your mind, I don't know.

Roy

I'm wondering . . .

Ravi

Because it's not sort of glazed and, you know, watching the television, and switching the channels type of thing. It's the opposite of that. It's focused, you know, so maybe it's a second cousin of mindfulness, I don't know.

Ursula

Well, I think it has an intentionality as you do it. If I'm going to *choose* this time when I'm walking to organize my thoughts, or if I'm going to lie in bed and let my thoughts run, you're automatically mindful, because you've made that conscious choice about how you're using the time.

Roy

I think that's a key distinction, Ursula.

(agreement)

One of the things that's always seemed to be so to me is that mindfulness isn't automatic.

Ravi

No.

Roy

I remember Tart being really clear about this too. That it requires a choice, although it happens spontaneously, but then to put your foot in the door seems to take some intentionality, and it sound like this is an intentional thing you're talking about.

Ravi

Yes, absolutely. I'm sure you're right, that what all of us have experienced many many times is the sense of, you know, the days go past, and you have no sense of intending to be mindful. And it just goes on and on and on and on. And, certainly what I have an experience of since the weekend is that it's just more and more times when I think about it, and it comes, and there's *more* of it . . . That by itself has just been a wonderful experience.

In fact, I suspect that Roy's not actually doing a Ph.D. at all. I mean, he's actually . . . this is a wonderful form of actually training us all in mindfulness.

(laughter)

Roy

I'll say, that's the aim. It just seems so . . . well, it's everything to me . . .

Ravi

It is, yes.

Roy

. . . and everything that I've ever known about spiritual development . . . this is it. I mean, this is what we're after.

Ravi

Yeah, I think you're right.

George

With mindfulness, I get an accentuated awareness that does come when I become mindful. I see things much more clearly, and what Ravi seems to be describing is going away somewhere else. It may be that the intentionality is saying, I won't listen to sounds, I won't look at things–I mean that that decision may well mean that you are being mindful . . . I don't know. But I wonder if you are, or if you are going away somewhere else, to some automatic . . .

Ravi

It doesn't feel automatic. It does feel intentional, and I think that, you know, I don't know–it some circumstances, when you want to be mindful, when you're doing something proactively, it sort of helps to focus all your attention on that. That's what I find, anyway.

Ursula

I wonder whether it's similar, you know, when we were doing the tasting exercise, it was natural for me to shut my eyes, because I didn't want the input

Ravi

Yes, exactly.

Ursula

. . . but also, my choice has also been sometimes to close my eyes, so that's limiting somewhat the amount of sensory input . . . and it sounds like when you're doing your thinking, it's almost like you're deciding to not have the sensory input, that you're going to be mindful about what your thoughts are. And you may also at that time be ironically conscious of your breathing, or of your physical presence . . .

Ravi

Yes, yes . . .

Ursula

. . . but it's almost like you don't need to be listening nor seeing things. Because we talked about this before about the difference between distracting and augmenting practices–which things are we choosing to add to put our split attention on–and I wonder if your attention is on your thinking. You know for example we said that Ravi. was thinking. And a most useful way to do split attention on your thinking would be to do something like being aware of your physical body, and breathing, rather than sound or . . .

Ravi
Yeah. I totally agree. You're spot on.

Sample of Observation Notes

11/17/2003 9:55 AM On Bus to Heathrow Airport

We completed yesterday about 3pm, at the restaurant, having had lunch.

We opened the morning with free-form sharing, picking up where we were. We followed this with a time for each of us to speak about who we were, what our life was like these days, and how mindful awareness might serve us. This seemed a perfect time for this–in spite of the fact that such a share might well have been "organized" more properly right up front on Friday night. I was glad I'd waited until the flow of the energy indicated a better time for it. We shared with a richness and wisdom, actually, that we didn't seem to have earlier in the weekend. The experiences we'd had, I believe, seeded what we had to say to each other Sunday morning. There was a richness and a depth to the shares, a real getting to the point.

We talked about the scales, and our experience of filling them out, over lunch. I am concerned that I might not be using those to the fullest extent possible. They don't aim to measure mindfulness per se, neither of us found them particularly illuminating, and I'm wondering if I could have introduced them in a

more effective way or whether they simply are of marginal value. We all agreed to fill them out again at the end of the four weeks, coming in to the second weekend. We can compare our scores then with our scores earlier and see if anything is illuminated. I think that's the best we can do with it. I do wonder if perhaps more instruments might have been helpful, although at least one of the people in the group stated that he would not have wanted to do more of them.

Comments were very favorable about the weekend's experience. We set up several conference calls, on average one every five days, and I arranged for us to use the conference calling system that I have set up for my dissertation committee, including the use of my calling card for the one member who wanted financial assistance with the calls. Also, for that same member, I reimbursed petrol money, which again was offered to all.

We discussed coding and, although there wasn't as much input as I was expecting from earlier discussions, we did touch upon categories that might be useful going into the data analysis:

- definitions of terms
- what will support me to make this work?
- what were we doing when we woke up?
- nature as an "awakener"
- what we do to put the foot in the door once we find the door open

- practices matching or not matching the activity entered into–thinking that matching is more effective
- natural learnings . . . (don't remember what this was in reference to)
- what takes us away from being mindful
- place of anxiety in not waking up
- place of openness to the unknown in waking up and being awake
- effect on others of our mindful moments

We practiced the two other sills: keyboarding, taught to us by Ursula, and listening, taught to us by Ravi.

I am delighted about the idea of having them teach the material to the group. It brought such an ownership, a sense of working as peers, a collaborative-ness, and a variety of approach and insights into things that I or any other one person would never have had. This was a <u>real</u> learning for me and, I suspect, it will change my teaching/learning style for good.

Looking back over the weekend, I believe I accomplished the following:

- establishing a co-researcher relationship within our group
- remaining open to the new ideas and directions taken by the group as individuals shared what they had to offer
- brought a research question and a basic approach to linking (split-attention) that allowed everyone room both to know what we were

doing and to get on board with it in their own way, and then to modify and add to what we were doing with their own creativity.

- maintained a space of inquiry, exploration, honoring, respecting, and openness to whatever would emerge
- watched carefully to make sure everyone was participating (although this wasn't difficult at all, due to their taking of responsibility for themselves and for each other's welfare.
- participated fully, while making sure not to speak first on most matters or seed their awareness with my own. That includes actually speaking first a couple of times, once at Ursula's invitation, to break up that pattern as well.
- I managed my severe cold well during the weekend, letting it be, taking care of myself, staying present with it.

Things I didn't do well, wish I'd done differently, or have questions and concerns about:

- I didn't take a picture all weekend. Often, I just forgot. When I did remember, I couldn't sense a way to do it without pulling myself out of the group or introducing an additional element of artificiality. I'd like to do something different next time–perhaps have my camera available, and invite everyone to use it at mealtimes, for example.
- I didn't keep checking the quality of our recordings, so that my transcriber just couldn't make out some of the material–quite a lot of

it, actually–because the conference mike was garbling the sound. Fortunately, I can hear well enough–at least a spot check of each audio file indicates this–to do my own transcribing. While I'm not thrilled about doing probably 80% of the transcribing, I do think that this will put me in touch with the material in a unique way. I'll need to manage my energy in doing so, and realize that it may lengthen the data analysis time . . . although perhaps it will aid it?

Sample Journal Entry

The following is from Ursula's inquiry journal. Like all of our journal entries, this was posted in our online web site so that we could read it before our weekly conference call.

Wednesday 26 November 2003 @ 10.42pm

Hmmm. I've been rather remiss about my journal keeping during my trip away. Also, having the conference call as another means of summing up made a journal entry last night rather redundant.

I'm noticing a few similar things and a few new-ish things–or things I don't think I've articulated yet , but it's still worth noting that I'm getting used to my experience of eating being enhanced whenever I'm mindful. This morning during my scrambled eggs and smoked salmon, I was really noticing the succulence of the food–being mindful brings in the extra dimensions of texture and sounds–these are my favorite augmentations. I think the only other notable

thing is realizing there are some things which I eat which I don't actually like–undressed salad for example.

This is similar to my discovery after being mindful during yoga that I don't actually love doing it that much. I like stretching and being challenged, but what I like best is having done it and what it does to my body. But I LOVE dancing. I'm really looking forward to going to my dance class this weekend–this will be the first time since I started practicing mindfulness. I'm curious about how it will be.

My song has started taking an interesting slant towards the sensual experiences of mindfulness–I want to involve the idea of *One Taste* (the title of a Wilber book which I haven't got around to yet and the theme of which, I'm ignorant of and which might not fit). But I'm pretty sure the word "chocolate" will feature. *Delicious* may become another theme!

Another *side effect* I've noticed is my improved posture–when I'm mindful ,sitting or standing, I notice what I'm up to, and often lengthen my spine.

And another *side effect* is noticing thoughtless moments (empty mind) when I'm mindful and don't follow a thought trail–I notice myself as present and at the same time. There were a couple of times in the training room today when I was listening to a share or an interaction, mindful, conscious of my posture and breathing and listening, and noticing that I was just being present and wasn't thinking about anything.

Roy asked us to write about our mindfulness before the weekend.

My memory is that I was often present, but not mindful (as in aware that I was aware). I was often strongly evoked by things–a stunning moon, some particularly fantastic porridge, (when I stayed at a country house on a workshop recently (but interestingly–we were all invited to be silent during the morning and through breakfast until we began the singing part of the workshop later in the morning–so I wonder whether being silent automatically enhanced my enjoyment of my food), etc..

I had a particularly memorable moment during a recent gig when I was conscious that I was present in that experience–aware of the lights, the sound of my voice and "in" the song–in the music.

I also had a *peak* moment in July when I was walking in the most glorious summer weather through the beautiful countryside with a beloved friend, feeling very full in my heart and would say that I was *mindful* in that moment because I was so aware of my physical and emotional experience at the same time. In fact, later in that day, I wept with pure gratitude whilst driving–again because I was in extremely wonderful circumstances–listening to some gorgeous music on a state-of the-art sound system, as we sped through more of that same glorious day–beautiful countryside, incredibly delightful weather, with this precious person beside me, and I was completely present to my experience and to my response to my experience and believed I was graced.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Scales Utilized in the Inquiry

Friedman's SELF-R Scale

Directions: Each of us has a unique sense of who we are, our conception of self or identity. Below are several statements which people may use to describe their sense of self. Using the rating scale provided, rate the extent to which you agree with each.

Mark:

A STRONGLY AGREE
B SOMEWHAT AGREE
C NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE
D SOMEWHAT DISAGREE
E STRONGLY DISAGREE

I am willing to describe my sense of self or identity as including my emotions and feelings as experienced in the present.	**A B C D E**
I am willing to describe my sense of self or identity as including thoughts and feelings I experienced as a child.	**A B C D E**
I am willing to describe my sense of self or identity as including the unique individual that I am in the present.	**A B C D E**
I am willing to describe my sense of self or identity as including the social relationships which I experience.	**A B C D E**
I am willing to describe my sense of self or identity as including the way I behaved in living my life as a child.	**A B C D E**
I am willing to describe my sense of self or identity as including experiences of all life forms of which I am one.	**A B C D E**

I am willing to describe my sense of self or identity as including sensations from parts of my body, such as my heart, that I experience.	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
I am willing to describe my sense of self or identity as including the way I behave in living my life in the present.	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
I am willing to describe my sense of self or identity as including future happenings which I will experience.	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
I am willing to describe my sense of self or identity as including my thoughts and ideas as experienced in the present.	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
I am willing to describe my sense of self or identity as including the way I will behave in living my life in the future.	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
I am willing to describe my sense of self or identity as including the individual atoms of my body.	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
I am willing to describe my sense of self or identity as including the physical surroundings which have an influence on my behavior.	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
I am willing to describe my sense of self or identity as including all that happened before my lifetime which has in some way influenced me.	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
I am willing to describe my sense of self or identity as including the behavior of parts of my body, such as my facial expressions.	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
I am willing to describe my sense of self or identity as including my attitudes and values in the present.	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
I am willing to describe my sense of self or identity as including the entire universe beyond time which is me in an ultimate sense.	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
I am willing to describe my sense of self or identity as including the beings who might descend from me in the distant future who may not have human form.	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**

Howden's Spirituality Assessment Scale

Directions: Please indicate your response by circling the appropriate letters indicating how you respond to the statement.

Mark:
"SA" if you STRONGLY AGREE
"A" if you AGREE
"AM" if you AGREE MORE than DISAGREE
"DM" if you DISAGREE MORE than AGREE
"D" if you DISAGREE
"SD" if you STRONGLY DISAGREE

I have a general sense of belonging.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
I am able to forgive people who have done me wrong.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
I have the ability to rise above or go beyond a physical or psychological condition.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
I am concerned about the destruction of the environment.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
I have experienced moments of peace in a devastating event.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
I feel a kinship to other people.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
I feel a connection to all of life.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
I rely on an inner strength in hard times.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
I enjoy being of service to others.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
I can go to a spiritual dimension within myself for guidance.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
I have the ability to rise above or go beyond a body change or body loss.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**

I have a sense of harmony or inner peace.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
I have the ability for self-healing.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
I have an inner strength.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
The boundaries of my universe extend beyond usual ideas of what space and time are thought to be.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
I feel good about myself	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
I have a sense of balance in my life.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
There is fulfillment in my life.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
I feel a responsibility to preserve the planet.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
The meaning I have found for my life provides a sense of peace.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
Even when I feel discouraged I trust that life is good.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
My life has meaning and purpose.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
My innerness or an inner resource helps me deal with uncertainty in life.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
I have discovered my own strength in times of struggle.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
Reconciling relationships is important to me.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
I feel a part of the community in which I live.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
My inner strength is related to a belief in a Higher Power or Supreme Being.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**
I have goals and aims for my life.	**SA**	**A**	**AM**	**DM**	**D**	**SD**