

Mindful Work

Doing and Being

One of the key aspects that most people understand to be at the core of mindfulness, is about being *in the present moment*. What does this actually mean? You could say that we are always in the moment, because that's where we live our lives. However, we keep ourselves so busy and distracted, and spend so much time thinking about things that have happened, or things that may happen in the future, that we are rarely living fully in the now.

One of the ways that we know this to be true, is when we do things on **autopilot**. For example, how often have you driven from A to B, but on the way been thinking about any number of things, without really concentrating on the driving; your body just seems to take over and do it for you.

At work, in particular, we make ourselves busy, and even take pride in the fact that we don't have a moment to stop. Working long hours, taking work home, and generally playing the busyness game reduces effectiveness at work, and creates serious health risks. Then we relax by going to the gym, watching a movie, or drinking ourselves into torpor. We never really stop for a moment. This **'Doing'** mode.

We've probably all had experiences when time just seems to stand still. This happens particularly in nature, such as looking at a wonderful view of the sunset or the panorama at the top of a mountain. It is often a time when we get strong input of sensory data, such as hearing, body sensation, smell or taste. We don't try to analyse what's happening, we just get absorbed in the experience.

Or sometimes, we simply take a break from the busyness, and all the thinking. This is **'Being'** mode.

'Being' is time out, but it's not time wasted. In fact, these moments are when creativity and insight take place, or simply when we allow ourselves time to recharge and recalibrate.

Exercise: autopilot

Think back over your first few hours of the day. Make a list of all the activities you've undertaken, however mundane, starting with going to the loo, taking a shower, or eating breakfast.

Make an honest appraisal of how fully present you were to the activities you were engaged in. While you were brushing your teeth, for example, were you totally present to brushing your teeth, or were you thinking about what you were going to have for breakfast, urgent tasks ahead, which clothes you were going to wear etc.?

Score yourself out of five, giving zero if you were not at all present, and five if you were entirely present.

What does this tell you?

Repeat several times until you clearly see the pattern.

Workplace application

What do you do at work on autopilot? Why do you do this? How does it make you feel – more alive or less alive, better tuner into options and opportunities, or less?

Observe your work habits and whose agenda you're working to. How often do you take a 'creative pause' to breathe and recalibrate, between activities?

What happens if you do? See what happens if you take one minute 'Being' breaks between tasks.