

# **Our New Year's Message: 2016**

## **What's the Rush? Mastering the Distractions**

For the majority of us, our days feel like we're trying to cram six pounds of data into a three-pound brain. There's so much to do, see, learn, listen and respond to that distractions are the norm. Our effectiveness is compromised. Call it the human condition, blame it on the internet or multiple opportunities and demands, but learning effective tools to master these distractions will prepare us for tomorrow. The pace of life is not slowing down, but we can control how productively we respond to it.

Replacing interference, interruption and disturbance with learned attention allows you to seize and subdue the distractions. This is crucial to success going forward. And no, despite what popular culture may tell us, the brain is not built to do several things simultaneously. The attempt to do so divides the attention between various tasks, diluting both your purpose and outcomes.

It is about attention, focus and a learned ability to conquer disruptions, rather than trying to split yourself into emotional and intellectual pieces. Mindfulness is a method to manage our unruly minds, and at the same time be in control of what we do. This enables us to be effectively attentive to issues around us.

Managing brain overload and employing the true genius of your mind is about practice versus having a special gift. It's about taking time out to learn to focus, to quiet the mind and not allow competing thoughts to disrupt us quite so much. Although initially it feels like the chaos of our brains cannot be conquered, that's simply not the case. Important research suggests that as you practice certain concentration tasks, you change your brain in ways that enable it to acquire this focus more easily.

So, how do you practice mindfulness? It begins with not judging yourself and the jumble of ideas that go through your mind. This includes noticing what's going on and essentially bringing yourself back to a composed place, regardless of the distractions. Thinking of your mind as a pen full of puppies, you don't judge their energy as much as you seek to help them calm down and find a purpose.

The following are Six Simple Steps to get you started:

1. Find a peaceful environment. It doesn't have to be noiseless.
2. Sit in a comfortable position, but without slouching.
3. Close your eyes and begin to experience the calm.
4. Focus on your breathing through the nose, sensing that the air is cooler going in than when you breathe out of it.

5. Distractions are expected. Just go back to following your breathing.

6. Select an amount of time, perhaps between five and fifteen minutes, and try to do this at least once daily.

As you will see from the following link to a 60 Minutes report on mindfulness, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDxIBQT7F54> , people are actively using this practice to master the distractions of daily life.

My wish for you is to use this focusing ability to enhance your creativity and achieve a level of peace, calm and success.

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