



We are a growing community of mindfulness practitioners from different traditions and disciplines working together with a common aim of shaping, contributing to, and sustaining an emerging culture of mindfulness.

Waiting for Godot

By Dr. Dean Nelson

We're always waiting for presence to show up—funny right? We're filtering presence by always being slightly anxious about presence. Presence doesn't have a chance, because we're always projecting ahead. We grasp for what's next without even realizing it. Our whole lives are spent in "what's next," rarely in "right now." If you came to a screeching halt right now, you'd feel yourself subtly unable to remain there. What's a presence seeker to do? Microdose.

It takes a lot of commitment to get used to right now. Mainly because we don't know what to do with it. Right now is empty, boring even (at first), like those awkward lulls in a conversation. You can't find yourself in right now. You can only find yourself after right now is over, and that is frightening. The profundity of space doesn't confirm our identities. It's one reason we keep the ante up of busyness. We're used to the narrating babysitter who comforts us with our insecurity, who tells us we're OK and that we need to project ourselves into the next moment to feel safe.

To recognize the background of joy, job number one is getting used to space and presence. Start by microdosing presence. Microdose like crazy, many times a day. By microdosing I mean puncture whatever is going on by being still and letting your body melt into right here, right now. It might feel like you shut down and light up at the same time. Don't try to hold the space or judge anything. You might feel like you want to continue or, again, you might feel tenderness, a kind of subtle tearing up or sadness. That's your heart connecting with the nature of being through your eyes for a few seconds.

Presence, being, happiness are not way off in heaven or in somemystical Zen satori. It's always there in the background. Microdose many times a day and then, as

always, ask yourself, "Do I like how I feel when I do this, when I give myself permission to be present?" It's a necessary question, because the brain is used to filling space to feel safe. You're reprogramming your brain to recognize a deeper reality, a more innate joy. (Continued on page 2)

Mindfulness in Nature

By Lizabeth Kashinsky

We do not need to limit practicing mindfulness to a meditation cushion. Connecting with nature is one way to strengthen our ability to be present to the totality of our lives. I find that when I intentionally connect with nature, my senses become more alive, and through that direct experience of my senses, I am able to more fully engage with the world around me rather than getting lost in thought. How many moments of our lives do we miss when we go for a walk and spend our time planning or find our minds racing with ruminating thoughts? If we are not paying attention to the world around us, we might miss precious, yet simple moments, such as noticing the light glistening on a drop of dew on the tip of a blade of grass leaning towards the light, the sound of leaves fluttering in the wind, sunlight dappling along the ground as tree branches dance with that same wind, or the warmth of the sun and breeze blowing softly touching our face. These moments are happening all around us all the time, and they are available to us if we remember to be open to them.

Numerous studies demonstrate the physical as well as mental health benefits of practicing mindfulness, as well as spending time in nature, and both have been found to increase the ability to have empathy for others, including empathy for the non-human world. (Continued on page 3)



Waiting for Godot (Continued)

You say “Yes, I want more of that space happiness stuff,” and a synapse connects in your brain that allows you to recognize space and happiness more easily. It’s hard to remember to do many of these practices. Set up some environmental interruptions, something as basic as setting your cell phone to ping you every so often. I use the beauty of Hawai‘i as my intervention—I notice, and I remember to microdose. Continue to microdose many times a day.

I call this microdosing “perfection practice” because right now is perfect; there are no problems in it. Right now is insultingly complete and awake. I’ve also called this “acupuncture practice,” because it’s like using a sharp needle to poke a hole in the expectation of what’s next. You are poking holes in the seeming reality of anxiety, in the filtering of reality. Big stuff.

You’re puncturing the fog that keeps you from an uncensored experience of reality. The head can’t feel reality; feeling through the heart is how we cut through the static and experience sacredness. This takes some practice because the experience of sacredness is too ordinary, extra-ordinary, ineffable.

Hold up a piece of writing paper; it seems opaque. Then keep poking tiny holes, one at a time, with an acupuncture needle. Pretty soon you can see through the paper, and what’s on the other side comes into view. Something that once was solid is now both full of holes and open to the view of the other side. We have very fixed, solid ideas about our reality that are not about seeing what’s in front of us but rather what we *think* is in front of us. Perfection practice brings us fearlessly into the happiness of presence for a few seconds. That takes some getting used to. Meditation is an eraser; you erase ideas about yourself, your world and what’s happened in your life. Carrying that stuff around need not be a life sentence.

Begin Again

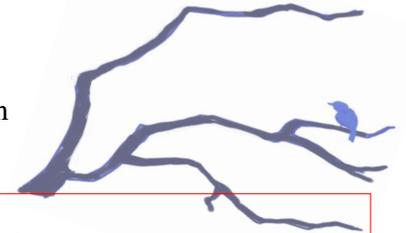
by Marion Lyman-Mersereau, 2019

I close my eyes
sit quiet and still
almost every morning
happy to just Be
I feel all the places
my body touches the chair
I notice my posture
upright but not rigid
belly and chest
rise and fall
as I breathe in
and out
cool air enters my nostrils
warm air departs

a sharma thrush
sings her full-throated tune
clear and true
like the flute
a musician neighbor
plays in the afternoon
mynahs sing
their squawky songs
sparrows chirp their parts
and gray doves bow and coo
desperate to woo
their chosen partner
while the feral rooster
crows his arrogant opinion
to all who will listen

enormous earth movers
busy with nearby
infrastructure work
awaken in their lair
growl and roar
like angry dragons
they drown out
the surrounding symphony
they paw the ground
and position themselves
anxious to exit the cage
that holds them captive all night

ripples of thought
set me adrift
my mind drags anchor
I begin again
upright but not rigid
belly and chest
rise and fall
as I breathe in
and out
cool air enters my nostrils
warm air departs



A person’s maturity
consists in having
found again the
seriousness one had
as a child at play.

—Friedrich Nietzsche

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Send comments or submissions (original content only please) to melakea@icloud.com

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Thank you!

Mindfulness in Nature (Continued from pg.1)

Practicing mindfulness by connecting with nature also reminds us of the interconnectedness of everything, as well as impermanence of life. Applying mindfulness can also strengthen a reciprocal relationship with the world around us. Too often in our modern world, nature is viewed as a resource to extract from or a place to recreate, rather than a place that is alive and part of our communities. Nature is everywhere, and we do not need to go into wild nature in order to establish a regular practice. It is as simple as spending time in silence while sitting or walking mindfully, engaging the senses, and being present with our experience. We can access nature from our yards, neighborhoods, and even indoors, where we can connect with houseplants and other objects from nature. Indoors, we can even contemplate man-made objects around us and how they too can connect us with nature, such as how our books or furniture, or the structures of our homes came from the earth in the form of trees. In this way, we can allow our senses, such as the sound of a bird to become our anchor to the present moment. We can connect with the elements. We might be more apt to notice the wind through a gentle breeze brushing against our skin, or the fire element through our observations of light patterns on leaves or noticing heat we generate in our bodies. We can honor our bodies as part of the earth, remembering that our bones are made of the minerals of the earth and our bodies contain the waters from the oceans and streams.

Nature connection practices might also offer a more expanded view of Self which can take us out of our own suffering and allow us to become more connected. We can honor all inhabitants of a place, including those present and those of the past. We can notice our breath changing and remember the sacred relationship between our breath and plants around us. We can practice reverence by making an offering to a place, whether through prayer, gesture, movement, or song. When we consider that we are not separate from nature, we might also become more aware of how our habits may contribute to the degradation of the natural world and may make more mindful, more sustainable choices which can promote healthier communities. As we become more mindful individuals, we in turn bring more presence to all of our relationships, communities, and the world around us.

T'ai Chi Chih® A Moving Meditation Joy Through Movement

By Terry Jennings
T'ai Chi Chih Accredited
Teacher since 1995



When asked to write about T'ai Chi Chih, I thought, where do I start? How do you talk about your best friend, your healer, your joy in life? My journey began after a Tantra Yoga Retreat in Maui where

I had been sitting on the floor for many hours in cross-legged position. When I returned home to Oahu and got out of the car, I couldn't stand up. What? Really?! Physical movement was my life, so how would I define myself if I was bent over and could hardly move? This began an amazing healing journey.

I took classes at the YMCA, "Your Healthy Back," had massages, rested, and could finally manage standing up without pain. I treated my back with velvet gloves and tenderness.

When something appears negative in your life, it may propel you forward toward an unexpected joy even enlightenment.

I had heard about T'ai Chi and thought, this is a moving modality that I hadn't learned before. I searched and studied T'ai Chi from two different teachers on Oahu. I struggled to learn the forms and after a few years I still didn't feel any benefit.

I abandoned all hope. Then, while attending a spiritual retreat in Oregon, a Caucasian woman got up and announced that she was a teacher of T'ai Chi Chih® (TCC). I crossed my arms and thought, "Really? I just learned two forms from two Chinese Sifus (teachers) with family lineage and you, who aren't even Chinese, are going to teach me another?" I don't like to admit that I was prejudiced, but I was.

The woman asked everyone to stand up and I went with the flow. Peer pressure. When she did the first movement—a rocking movement that's a warm up in TCC, I felt something. It was like an explosion, a recognition that vibrated deep in my soul. (Continued on pg. 4)

T'ai Chi Chih (Continued)

I felt I knew this movement in my DNA. I wanted to learn everything I could about this form and become a teacher to share the benefits.

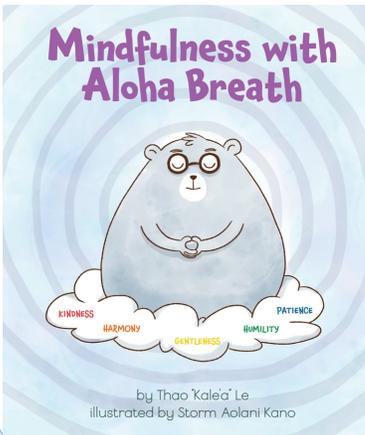
There was no teacher in Hawaii so I learned on television from Carmen Brocklehurst. She had a PBS special with Justin Stone, the originator and interviewed him in each segment. They talked about the spiritual aspects that naturally arise: an awakening of awareness, of knowledge, of simplicity, of softness.

T'ai Chi Chih is easy to learn, easy to do, and you feel the benefits soon after you begin the practice. No equipment is needed. TCC can be done anywhere, anytime, any age, standing or sitting, even just in your mind. The more you practice, the greater the benefits.

I have practiced every day for over 25 years. After joy arose spontaneously, then came greater energy and faster healing in mind and body. What can T'ai Chi Chih do for you? Release tension, stimulate creativity, physical health, joy, and more.

Learn more at Justin Stone's website, taichichih.org
Carmen's instruction on Youtube: <https://bit.ly/3j3CDmi>

Book from UH Manoa Family Studies Professor Teaches Children to Keep Aloha in Mind



You can catch Thao Le reading her new (and first) children's book, *Mindfulness with Aloha Breath* for the Institute of Climate and Peace and Matsunaga Institute for Peace on this link: [Mo'olelo Monday](https://bit.ly/3j3CDmi)

Purchases of the book will help get free copies to Hawai'i DOE schools on Oahu and outer islands. <https://bit.ly/32sL5oh>

On Kindness, Education and Life

By Thao Le

As I prepare for classes starting next week on campus, I decided to remove all exam requirements and to replace them with three service learning projects instead. Students will be challenged to integrate content knowledge they learned into creative outlets that can benefit and serve their community. I will be co-learning with them which is very exciting.

Tom Bodett said that "in school, you're taught lessons and then given a test. In life, you're given a test that teaches you a lesson."

Voice from the Unborn (excerpt)

By Frances Kakugawa

You promised me, eons ago,
A world, free of battlefields, soldiers, children
Abandoned in fear and hunger.
You offered me Hope, again and again.
A world, you said, where we will stand
Hand in hand, beyond color, religion, gender, age,
One race. One humanity.
My brothers and sisters who believed you
Are now old men and women, and they wait.
They wait.

Hiroshima, they said, was the start of Peace.
Listen to my voice, your unborn child.
Eons ago, you sliced the chrysanthemum
Off its stalk and left it
Naked in the sun.

Over the ashes of Hiroshima,
Our victory was hailed.
Beneath that, my ancestors lay buried.

Stop using me, your unborn child
For promises and meaningless rhetoric.
The future is now. I can't wait any longer.
The future is now. I want to be born.
Today. In Peace.

Doesn't it seem like we are all under a big test right now with this pandemic? Students do not need more testing, particularly right now. I recently rediscovered the Finnish educational model which is par excellence. They put joy, play, discovery, and relaxation front and center for teachers and students. Hey, that sounds a bit like mindfulness! Thanks to this pandemic, I've gained at least one insight before classes resume.

With mindfulness, kindness is the key component. It's hard to meditate if one cannot relate kindly with one's breath—or with anything, really. Interestingly, kindness is associated with sorrow and loss, too. Perhaps that is the lesson we are learning from this pandemic test—how to be kinder to ourselves and others as we grapple and grieve with all sorts of losses.