

This lesson that we're going to learn right now is about cultivating a successful mindfulness practice, so when we talk about cultivating a successful mindfulness practice, what I mean by that is how do we set up the kind of conditions in which our awareness, our attention, our compassion can flourish. Right... it is very much like a garden where you if you put in good soil and you put in good nutrients and you have it in a place where there is some good sun, you put in the water, then you don't really have to worry about it, right, like that's there is so much, and I am their gardener so it's like if you put those good things in, you don't have to do much work at all, but you have to do a lot of work right in the beginning to set it up and make sure it's going to, if not you gonna have to keep like ahh, what's wrong here, why isn't it doing it, and often that turns into frustration so I see that a lot in people who have been practicing mindfulness for years. There is the experience of mindfulness as this kind of battle like I am trying to, I know that I have seen the science, I know that mindfulness is supposed to be really good for me, I know that it makes, it does all these things from like makes gene expression, it looks like now like the Telomeres in the body are strengthened which are like kind of like the endings of your genes which is actually shows what makes you live longer like is helped with mindfulness practice. Like all of these amazing science of relaxation of cultivation of greater happiness like across the world, the science is amazing so we would all see, I really should do this. But for myself and there are probably so many of you what ends up happening is it becomes this fight. It is like I really should go and sit and do this thing that is supposed to be helpful for me. What I am really interested in is watching how sometimes if you go to a mindfulness training pretty much right away, they will say, okay, let's, we are gonna do this sitting practice which is gonna be like 40

minutes and you are just gonna watch your breath and so you sat and you started watching your breath and you have just come in from a day of commuting and working and you sit down and the mind is spinning and there is all these tasks and it's kind of like a 40 minutes of like just wrestling with your mind and often that ends with a real sense of frustration right.

For me what I have seen in my own mind and students is that if you do that, you are actually kind of wiring your brain towards thinking that mindfulness is a frustration and a battle. Right, so then the next time it makes sense that you are like, oh yeah, I should go and do my mindfulness practice, that part of your mind is yelling like, don't do that, that is so boring right. And so we want to see is how can we set it up so when we do a mindfulness practice, the experience that you are going to finish with is, oh wow, that felt really great. That was really interesting, I want to explore that more, which necessitates especially in our modern lives, in our bodies, and what we are doing, not setting it up, so that we are doing this really long extended practice especially you know, we have the Five Literacies of Mindfulness that we are going to keep exploring. We do this physical literacy for kids but also for us as adults. To do some movement practice, some walking, some often that is really helpful to start with so that it is not just, I know this from so many kids, so many adults, that if I just tried to say, okay sit down and practice, there is just like, so much energy in there, it's not within range. It's not appropriate, it's not helpful. So for a lot of people, we need to start by doing some movement. Maybe it is some mindful dancing, mindful walking, whatever it is going to be, that is going to help you enjoy bringing your awareness to the present moment, right.

So that brings us to the big question of what we are exploring, which is what is mindfulness, right? And in that there is really the question of the idea of a mindful orientation or kind of a mindful view, or like basically how we are in the world in the sense of mindfulness and also mindfulness practices or mindfulness exercises, just a little bit different right. One of them is more of a kind of not exactly a philosophy but just a way of being, the other one is actually a way of cultivating, of creating a building in these specific aspects. It is really important to remember that a lot of teachers, a lot of you are probably and probably were probably incredibly mindful teachers having never heard of or practiced mindfulness. There is plenty of people who are very open hearted and are very present and might never practice mindfulness their entire lives and yet I would say that they are very mindful people right. So, you don't have to practice these mindfulness exercises in order to be a mindful person, but they are really helpful, right. They are really supportive of these, mindfulness is just a natural human phenomenon and this is why if we look into like what is the history of mindfulness, we can look at any tradition around the world whether it is a religion or an indigenous community or whatever it is and if we were looking in an indigenous community that needs to hunt and weave this like intricate beautiful baskets and whatever, you need some serious mindfulness in order to be able to be aware that aware and aware of the natural world, attuned to the natural world and compassionate in that community. This is not some kind of new fangled thing mindfulness, this is something that as humans we have all had forever.

And a lot of different religions have looked at how do we take these natural human capacities and foster them, right, the idea of compassion, how do we notice this natural human faculty of compassion, how do we build it, how do we strengthen it. We take this

specific focusing capacity, how do we strengthen that, how do we build upon that, and so lot of different traditions have created practices specifically to help cultivate just the natural orientation. There is some if we look at the kind of modern mindfulness field, there are some people who are teaching mindfulness without any of the practices, its more of just an orientation. Ellen Langer does a lot of work around this where she is really trying to teach how do we orient towards the present moment in an open hearted way, how do we have that just as our that's our practice right. Not sitting silently, not doing walking practices, just orienting towards every moment, right, brushing the teeth mindfully, speaking to an audience mindfully, just orienting again and again and again, everything is practice right which is a beautiful way to explore it.