

Awareness Over Anxiety

By Courtney Schulnick



As I begin my morning routine of savoring a hot cup of coffee before anyone awakens in my home, my mind begins to wander. On one end, I reminisce about what life was like before the COVID-19 pandemic, when I didn't think twice about riding a SEPTA bus full of tightly-packed passengers, food shopping in a busy supermarket, sitting with thousands of other Sixers fans in the Wells Fargo Center to watch a basketball game, attending music concerts at small, crowded venues, or shaking hands when greeting others.

On the other end, my mind fast-forwards into the future, worrying about what life may be like after social-distancing restrictions ease: what if someone in my office gets the coronavirus? Will I get sick? When can I get back into the courtroom to advocate for my clients? Will my children get to go to day camp this summer? What about

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returning to classes in the school building next year – will that even happen? Will a second wave of the pandemic hit in the fall? An overwhelming sense of anxiety suddenly comes over me, and I begin to realize that I have been lost in thought.

The reality is that while we can plan ahead and do our best to make skillful choices in life, we don't know for certain what the future will bring. But what we do know is this moment. Oftentimes, we are completely unaware of how or where we are in the present moment, or perhaps we are aware of the present moment, but resistant to what is here because it may feel unpleasant. But living in this way can bring on a great deal of suffering for ourselves and cause us to miss out on the moments of our lives.

We can show up for our lives by noticing when our mind has gotten hijacked by our thoughts—so-to-speak. The gateway to the present moment is awareness. And the way we gain a deeper awareness of the mind/body state is by regularly practicing mindfulness meditation. Over time, we can cultivate what is described by Jon Kabat-Zinn, the pioneer of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction pro-

gram, as the seven attitudinal foundations, which enable us to relax and soften into what's here without needing to change it. With a gentle and curious attitude, we begin to notice what's arising in our mind and body, moment-to-moment, allowing ourselves to be exactly as we are and not needing to judge our experience.

If you are interested in strengthening your ability to be in the present moment and learning ways to better support yourself during this time of great challenge and uncertainty, please join me and members of the Wellness Committee for "Mindful Mondays" every Monday at 8 a.m. via Zoom. Attendees will be guided in meditation to help anchor to the present moment, reduce stress and anxiety, and increasingly weave mindfulness into their daily lives. Additionally, you can visit <https://www.courtneyschulnickmindfulness.com> to obtain recordings of mindfulness meditations and learn more about mindfulness and my programs.

To learn more about my mindfulness programs that are being offered via Zoom, please visit www.courtneyschulnickmindfulness.com or call me at (856) 261-8875.

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