

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Cultivating Mindfulness Practice

BY STEVE

At this point in the semester, I sometimes receive emails from students apologizing for not being able to attend Sangha, the student meditation group. My response is always something like this: I understand, this is a very busy time, I look forward to seeing you soon. I might suggest that they take 5 minutes after they finish one of their assignments and just breathe deeply. That's all. Just breathe. Breathe.

Meditation, like all mindfulness activities, is a practice. This means, among other things, that the benefits of the practice slowly manifest over time. That's not to say, of course, that a particular practice might hit the spot, as people sometimes say after an especially fine meal. I've heard longtime meditators describe how they had vivid, intense experiences the very first time they closed their eyes and watched their breath. But generally the effects of meditation are realized over time; these effects are quiet, sometimes subtle.

Mindfulness practices work best when they are part of our daily routine. All of us have daily routines of some kind. Often routines are found at the beginning and end of our days. For example, when we wake up most of us have a routine we follow, and this routine is largely organized around the needs of the body. We brush our teeth, eliminate waste, and bathe or otherwise clean ourselves. Many

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people start the day with a cup of coffee or hot tea. Some people like to get up early and not feel rushed, while others want to sleep as long as possible. End of day routines are more focused on preparation for a good night's sleep. These routines give a particular shape or form to our day. If we like a quiet, slow start to the day, breaking that routine makes for a different sort of day from the ordinary. Sometimes that might be exciting (waking early and traveling to see family or friends) or not so much (waking to finish a project). Both morning and evening routines are good times to cultivate mindfulness practices.

While we organize the beginning and end of day with routines, everything else is organized according to a schedule. We have our own schedules, and we are parts of other people's schedules. For example, I teach a class later today and so that time is marked on my schedule. Every day I have administrative functions to perform, emails to return, classes to teach, and appointments to keep—sometimes it can feel like nothing other than, as Robert Frost would have it, miles to go before I sleep. Miles to go. While “schedule” is an old word that first began to be used in Middle Ages, "schedule" only began to be used as a verb in the nineteenth century industrial revolution. Trains were scheduled then. Now we are scheduled—sometimes, in fact, we are overscheduled (a particular usage that developed in the 1920s).

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For a list of our regularly scheduled fellowship group meetings, go to the [Spiritual Life webpage](#) and click on “Spiritual Organizations on Campus.”
Like us on Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/LynchburgSLC>
Helpful Links on LinkTree at - [SpiritualLifeCenter](#)

Dates to Remember

Roman Catholic Mass
Sundays, 4:30 p.m.

Vespers
Sundays, 9 p.m.

Monday, November 2 - 8 p.m.
Service of Remembrance

Details in next week's
Chaplain's Corner
newsletter.



**SPIRITUAL LIFE
SERVICES**

**are live-
streamed via
our YouTube
Channel**

Cultivating Mindfulness Practice (cont'd)

We live in a culture that has fetishized busyness. The word “multi-task” was coined in the 1960s with reference to the capacity of computers to work at many different activities at one time. By the late 1980s and early 1990s “multitasking” lost its hyphen and became a verb applied to human beings who are in a state of perpetual busyness. We imagine ourselves to be trains and computers, mechanical devices that simply exist to perform multiple tasks on schedule. It’s no surprise, really, that by the turn of the twenty-first century we start to find references to “me time,” breaks in our overscheduled lives that we can compare to busyness holidays—me time is when we take refuge from multitasking.

Mindfulness practices are a good way to remind ourselves that we are not trains, computers, or smart phones. An important stage in developing a mindfulness practice is making it a part of our daily routine in the same way that brushing our teeth or drinking tea is. Give it a try: Regardless of how busy you are right now, how overscheduled you might be, see if you can work five minutes into your morning routine for the next 30 days. Just some deep breathing or a breath awareness meditation. That’s all. Just breathe. Breathe.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti (Peace)

This week's article was written by Dr. Stephen Dawson, Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Chair of the Philosophy Department. Dr. Dawson serves as the advisor for Garam Masala and the Sangha meditation group.

The Chaplain's Corner is a newsletter published by the Spiritual Life Center (SLC) at the University of Lynchburg. We share campus concerns and updates, spiritual life events and activities, and words for the journey.

If you have a joy or concern you'd like to share, reply to this message, email the SLC office - spirituallife@lynchburg.edu, or call 434.544.8348. We only share with your permission. Current and previous issues are on the SLC page of the University website - www.lynchburg.edu/spiritual-life.