AWAKE AND AWARE: UTILIZING SPLIT-ATTENTION TO LINK MINDFUL AWARENESS WITH EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES

by

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read AWAKE AND AWARE: UTILIZING SPLIT-ATTENTION TO LINK MINDFUL AWARENESS WITH EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES by W. Roy Whitten, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Transformative Learning and Change at the California Institute of Integral Studies.

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GENERATING MINDFULNESS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Abstract

Fourteen years ago, Tart (1990) suggested that people could use some of Gurdjieff's practices to extend the experience of mindful awareness–most often learned at a Buddhist-oriented retreat–into the complexity and turmoil of their daily lives. He defined mindful awareness, introduced the Gurdjieff practices of self-observation and self-remembering, offered a set of guidelines developed from his work with mindfulness studies in general and Gurdjieff's work in particular, and he invited teachers and practitioners of mindfulness to experiment with these guidelines and publish their results. To date, no one has formally responded to his invitation.

This research project was inspired by Tart's invitation, and it reflected the researcher's lifelong interest in the possibility of generating mindful awareness in the midst of daily activities. This study addressed systemic limitations that appeared to exist in the current pedagogy of mindfulness training which was fundamentally reliant on a meditation-based methodology that required regular and, at times, lengthy *withdrawal* from everyday life .

Four co-researchers cooperatively participated in a 90-day inquiry into the question: *what happens when people link mindful awareness with everyday*

activities? They employed the Gurdjieffian practice of split-attention (Ouspensky, 1977; Tart, 1994) as the linking activity, spent 95% of the inquiry in their own work/life environment, and, during this three-month period, invested 70 hours in mutual reflection on their experiences.

The study utilized case study methodology to evaluate and describe the experience of participants. The results included a marked increase in the experience of mindful awareness in the midst of everyday life. The events and circumstances of life at work and at home, which previously had appeared to be barriers to mindful awareness, often functioned as the occasions for *waking up* into mindful awareness. Participants found themselves waking up far more often in the midst of their daily activities, they became somewhat more proficient at extending these moments of mindfulness when they occurred, and they determined that the practice of split-attention was practical, easy to use, and highly effective.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Researcher's Context

For three decades now, my professional life has been intertwined with a passion for the experience of mindful awareness. In September, 1973, at the beginning of my final year in graduate school, I experienced what Grof (2001) called a *spontaneous transpersonal experience*. At the time, I didn't have this label to describe my experience; for years I described it as a feeling of simultaneously *imploding* and *exploding.* It was a more dramatic version of incidents from childhood, when I would sit at top of a tall tree near a rock quarry in the little Southern California town where I was raised. Now, I recognize these experiences as forms of *mindful awareness:* a sense of presence, awake and alive to the moment, and *aware* of myself *as* awake in the moment.

As my professional interests took me from parish priesthood into pastoral therapy, spiritual direction, human development training, business consulting, executive coaching, and professional mediation, the experience of mindfulness–its challenges and possibilities–was the ground to which I kept returning. Chasing it pulled me along my professional path; learning about it and teaching it to others galvanized and directed my attention. Of course, there were periods of time when I neglected the experience entirely and became interested in other things, but my passion for mindful awareness always returned to occupy a central place in my understanding of who I am and what my life is about.

Like many others, I have experimented with multiple methods of opening myself to the experience of being *awake, aware of being aware,* and *in the present moment.* I've spent nearly 40 years experimenting with prayer, meditation, psychological and spiritual development, psychic exploration, and retreats of various sizes and shapes. I regret none of it, and I'm especially grateful to the many teachers along the way. Through it all, I noticed a fundamental, cyclical pattern: I would (a) experience often profound stretches of mindful awareness while in meditation or on retreat; which I would (b) lose when I returned to my everyday activities; in response to which I would (c) invest more time in meditative activities, psychological reflection, and retreats; until finally I would (d) give up, concluding that mindful awareness just couldn't be sustained in any meaningful way in daily life; and, when the longing for mindful awareness would grow strong enough, I would (e) start the cycle all over again.

This pattern shifted in the fall of 2001, when, immersed in doctoral studies, amidst the freedom afforded by a year-long sabbatical, the rediscovery of Tart's article (1990) inspired an idea: use the practice of split-attention (which had been my on-again, off-again practice for two decades) to *link* the experience of mindful awareness–which the practice often brought–to the activities of my daily life. It occurred to me that, if I could use split-attention to link the experience of mindful awareness *to* specific activities that formed the backbone of daily life, then, perhaps, when I undertook those activities, I would *wake up* into mindful awareness instead of *staying asleep* in the thrall of my automatic thought process. I wondered if this might expanded my capacity to be mindful in the *midst* of my

day-to-day life instead of in *spite* of it. I spent 18 months experimenting with this notion, and I noticed enough changes in my level of mindful awareness each day, that I decided to undertake this study and see (a) if this linking practice would work for others and (b) if my own experience would be enhanced by the collaborative nature of a participative inquiry.

The Question

The core question of this study–also known as the *research problem* (Merriam, 2001) or the *grand tour question* (Creswell, 2003)–was: what happens when people link mindful awareness to everyday activities?

In addition to this core question, there were specific issue questions–also known as *sub-questions* (Creswell, 2003), *particularizing questions* (Maxwell, 1996), or *research questions* (Merriam, 2001)–that determined the data I sought, the data analysis I pursued, and the format of my research report. I was also aware of the following *topical issues* (Stake, 1995) that represented information I wanted to obtain:

- What was the participants' previous experience of mindful awareness?
- What was their estimate of how often they experienced spontaneously *waking up* each day (Tart's first form of mindful experience), and how long did these periods of mindfulness last?
- How did other people, considered authoritative in the field, describe their mindful experience and its benefits?

I was also aware of the following list of *research issues* which I was willing to amend through progressive focusing (Stake, 1995) as required during the study.

- What changes were there in the consistency and quality of mindful moments in the participants' everyday lives?
- What differences were there in the everyday experience of the six specific everyday activities that participants were linking to mindfulness?
- How effective were each of the six activities in *calling* people to mindfulness in the midst of everyday life?
- What was the impact of this program on the overall quality of participants' lives?

The Purpose

I was personally familiar with the frustration of being unable to sustain in daily life the mindfulness I experienced in meditation and on retreat. I wanted to make a contribution to the existing pedagogy of mindful awareness training by augmenting existing pedagogy with a practice that was simple, adaptable, and effective. I expected to be surprised by new perspectives and understandings regarding the general experience of mindful awareness and the specific practice of learning how to generate it in the midst of day-to-day living.

The Significance of the Research

There are several groups of people who can benefit from this research. There are: (a) the teachers of mindfulness, who can augment their pedagogical methodologies with the practice of split-attention and possibly increase the effectiveness of their instruction; (b) the students of mindfulness, who can with relative ease add this practice to their existing disciplines and approaches to generating mindful awareness in their everyday lives; and (c) the family, friends, and colleagues of these people, who are on the receiving end of what these teachers and students think, feel, and do as a result of being more mindfully aware at home and at work.

I believe that the practice of using split-attention to link mindful awareness with activities fundamental to people's daily lives is a simple and effective addition to the ways that mindful awareness is taught and practiced. I do not want to overstate or understate the benefits of being more mindfully aware during the day-to-day activities of life. There is ample evidence in this study and in the literature of this field that decisions made at home and work–when undertaken from a mindful perspective–often contain less judgment and more objectivity, less driven-ness and more ease, less reactivity and more wisdom. Mindful awareness brings a freedom from habitual patterns of thinking and behavior, a freedom that leads to greater open-mindedness, compassion, discernment, and capacity for fresh and unpredictable responses to the challenges of life. Frankly, our world–from the most local to the most global of levels–is

desperately in need of the clear-eyed, objective creativity that mindful awareness can bring.

Researcher Assumptions

As I undertook this study, I was aware of numerous assumptions about mindful awareness in general, the culture in which I lived, and the experiences of mindful awareness that were part of my personal history.

Assumptions about Mindful Awareness

I assumed that *mindfulness was not easily understood in our American culture*. This assumption was drawn from three decades of teaching personal development to thousands of people. I restricted this comment to my own, American, culture, but I believed it also applied to the prevailing cultures of other countries in which I'd worked: the United Kingdom, South Africa, New Zealand, and the people I'd worked with in Latin America who were both educated and professional.

I assumed that *the lack of familiarity with mindfulness was a significant deficiency* in our practical and spiritual education, and that it reflected the condition of humanity as a whole. Although many of the people with whom I'd worked were able to experience mindful awareness and were enormously attracted to the experience, they tended to get lost (as most of us do) in their mind's perceptions and thoughts about their day-to-day circumstances. I believed that this was a human tendency that was exacerbated by what we call *civilized* culture. From my own experience of the benefits found in the experience of

mindful awareness, I concluded that our culture is much the worse for its ignorance of this possibility for human beings.

I assumed that *the experience of mindfulness was fundamentally important to human existence*. In my life, the experience of mindful awareness, even for short periods of time, had generated a profound effect on matters fundamental to my emotional, psychological, and spiritual development: self-identity, self-esteem, personal authority, creativity, peace of mind, trust, courage, and truthfulness. I held this experience in high regard–higher, in fact, than any other experience, insight, feeling, or state of being. I was purposeful, therefore, about bracketing this opinion during the study, so that I was freer to discern the relative importance of mindful awareness for my co-researchers and to appreciate the level of regard in which they held mindful awareness.

I assumed that *Tart's definition of mindfulness was authoritative and accurate.* I based this on his standing in the fields of conscious studies and transpersonal psychology.

I assumed that *I was capable of comparing my experience to Tart's description and concluding that they matched.* When I read Tart's four-fold description of mindful awareness (1990), I identified those experiences as my own. Since I was approaching this study from a participatory paradigm (Patton, 2002), my assumption was not so much that I completely understood the meaning Tart had behind his words; rather, I assumed that I could trust myself to identify his description as applying to experiences that I had undergone in my life. This was an important assumption to keep in mind, because it indicated that (a) I alone

was responsible for deciding if and when I was experiencing mindful awareness, and (b) my co-researchers were similarly responsible for making that determination for themselves.

I assumed that *the experience of mindfulness is usually brief.* In my experience, mindful awareness usually lasted for a few moments, a minute or two at most. I assumed this was true for others.

Assumptions about my own Experience of Mindfulness

I assumed that *my experience of mindfulness and mind*less*ness was similar to that of others.* I assumed that my long-standing interest in mindful awareness *might* provide a greater understanding and more experience of mindfulness than others might have; however, I also assumed that the *experience itself* of mindfulness and mind*less*ness was common to all people.

I assumed that *what worked for me would work for others*. This had been a fundamental premise of my educational work for 35 years, and it was a fundamental premise of this inquiry; linking mindful awareness to everyday activities had provided significant benefits for me, and I believed that it would have similar benefits for others.

Contrarily, I also assumed that *what works for me* won't *work for others.* In my life, I had often been the *odd man out,* especially when it came to matters of spiritual and psychological development. This was why my learnings about mindfulness had been mostly a private affair. I was aware that undertaking this study required a certain courage and vulnerability on my part. I was also aware that it was important to keep this assumption in mind during the inquiry, so that I

didn't take offense when people disagreed with me or dismissed matters that I considered important. I did not want any defensiveness on my part to interfere with my capacity to clearly perceive and fully appreciate our experiences during the study.

Assumptions about Mindfulness Pedagogy

I assumed that I was correct in concluding that that the experience of mindfulness and the practice of meditation (especially *vipassana* meditation) are often regarded as the same thing. I assumed that this was reflective of the human tendency to confuse method with results, and that it led people to focus on the practice of meditation instead of the experience of mindful awareness.

I assumed that *people in a mindful state could sometimes tell whether or not others were experiencing mindfulness at that moment.* There were two reasons that I thought it was important to keep this assumption clearly in mind: (a) our group of co-researchers could be of valuable support to each other by sharing their perceptions of this matter, and (b) it was vital that we bracket our opinions so that the independent judgment of each person was upheld when it came to that person's responsibility for identifying mindful awareness when it appeared.

I assumed that *exploring what happened for people when they were mindful required experiential inquiry.* I assumed that mindfulness was a state of being–something experienced *in real time*. I assumed that, although people could have *concepts* about mindful awareness, *ideas* about techniques of generating mindful awareness, and *explanations* about the experience of mindful awareness, mindfulness itself was not a concept, an idea, or an explanation: it was an

experience of a certain kind and quality of awareness. Therefore, for co-researchers to explore what happened when they were being mindful in daily life, I assumed that they would need to *experience* mindful awareness *in their everyday lives*. This was a *very* strong assumption on my part, and I was determined to keep my eye on it, because it could blind me to concepts, ideas, and explanations that could be very helpful to people wishing to generate mindfulness in their everyday lives. I was aware that this dissertation, for example, would consist *exclusively* of ideas, concepts, and explanations, and, hopefully, it would add value to the process of people discovering the experience of mindful awareness in their everyday lives.

I assumed that *the time-honored methodology of meditation and retreat, including the dynamics of group collaboration and mutual support, was helpful to learning how to be mindfully aware.* This assumption was based on my own experiences as student and teacher and the value I placed on both the practice of meditation and the experience of retreat. Furthermore, I was aware that the face-to-face meetings the four of us would have as part of this inquiry would have a retreat quality to them, i.e., a departure from normal living. I wanted to respect the existing ways in which each of us was learning mindful awareness, and, through the practice of split-attention, add value especially to the 95% of our inquiry that would take place in the setting of our own day-to-day lives.

Most importantly, I assumed that *it was possible for the everyday events of life to serve as reminding functions for mindful awareness.* This had been true in my own experience and, while I did not know if it was possible for others, I

intended to hold open that possibility so that it might be fully and objectively explored.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This review begins with the shift in Western understanding about human awareness that has occurred during the past 45 years. It examines the explosion of interest in and teaching about the human capacity to be *awake and aware in the present moment*, a capacity has become known primarily as *mindfulness* and has been identified with the practice of meditation. The review tracks how mindfulness has been defined and described, enumerates some of its many benefits, and examines the pedagogies by which it is taught: especially the Buddhist pedagogy which is, by far, the predominant force in the teaching of mindful awareness in our culture.

The review then examines the systemic limitations arising from (a) the popularization of mindfulness and (b) the grounding of its pedagogy in Buddhist practice. It suggests that existing pedagogies can be *strengthened and enhanced* by reorienting our relationship to the ordinary events of everyday life through the utilization of *split-attention*, and it suggests that such a reorientation can support the process by which human beings are attracted by reality itself to a higher level of awareness in which they can make decisions that benefit humanity.

Over 300 publications were reviewed, many of which were in fundamental agreement about elements of the experience of mindful awareness and its pedagogy. The references cited below were chosen according to the following principles: (a) works that illustrated a given point particularly well; (b) works that

were considered classic or fundamental to the understandings of other works; (c) if several works that could be cited had *already* been cited, another work that the reader might find especially helpful was chosen.

A Shift of Understanding about Human Awareness

It was more than half a century after James published his seminal work (1902/1997) that Eastern thought found a welcome reception in the West. As the United States entered the 1960s, post-war prosperity and scientific advances had brought unprecedented affluence and technological control. We found ourselves becoming the most powerful nation on earth, we had a vital and intelligent president, and, with our eyes on a trip to the moon, virtually the sky was the limit. At the same time, our children regularly practiced diving under their desks for protection from nuclear attack, and novelists and playwrights– often the signalers of change–had raised questions about the illusions of rationality, capitalism, and unquestioned authority (Huxley, 1945; Orwell, 1954, 1949; Sinclair, 1946;). The possibility of and the need for change was in the air, and, 50 years after the seminal insights of William James, educators were turning to the subject of human awareness, its perception of reality, and what the world's religions might have to offer on this subject (Huxley, 1945, 1994; Smith, 1992; Watts, 1960, 1972).

Around 1960, exploration into the possibilities of human awareness began to expand exponentially. Accounts of these explorations–one of the most readable of which is Schwartz (1995)–document a wide range of activity and experiments with changes in human awareness: a shift from the level of

awareness with which most people lived everyday to an experience of *being aware of being aware*–an experience that, primarily, became known as *mindful awareness*. Early experiments with hallucinogens–conducted by Leary, McClelland, Alpert, and Grof–demonstrated that human beings could expand their awareness beyond whatever was the object of their attention. They could, in fact, become aware *of being aware*. Very quickly, and partly in response to the limitations and dangers of drug-induced experience, researchers and educators turned to Eastern practices and spiritual disciplines, which had been dedicated for many centuries to the practice of *present-moment awareness.* This meeting of East and West ignited an explosion of activity and exploration into how people could *be here now* and what happened to them as a result.

- Theologians, philosophers, and teachers published accessible and influential books in English that explicated Hindu, Buddhist, Sufi, and Taoist thought and practice (Ghose, 1973; Gunaratana, 1991; Hanh, 1975, 1987; Harding, 2002; Helminski, 1992; Krishnamurti 1969; Mahesh Yogi, 1968; Norbu, 1987; Pearce, 1975; Ram Dass, 1971; Sogyal, 1994; Sole-Leris, 1986; D. Suzuki, 1986, 1991; S. Suzuki, 2001; Watts, 1972, 1973).
- Experimentation with altered states of consciousness–drug-induced and generated through a variety of meditative techniques, music, and dance–became wide-spread in the 1960s. Institutions were established as centers of formal and informal learning and exploration: Murphy and Price founded Esalen in 1962, Trungpa started Naropa Institute in

1974, Chaudhuri traveled from India to become the founding president of the California Institute of Asian Studies in 1968.

- Retreat centers, mostly Buddhist in orientation, multiplied across America, gathering around figures such as Hanh (2000) and Katagiri (1988, 2000). Two of the most influential people in this movement were Kornfield and Goldstein, two Americans who, respectively, had spent time in Thailand and India, and whose aim was to bring Buddhism to America without the robes and the gurus (Schwartz, 1995). Together, they founded the Insight Meditation Society in Massachusetts in 1976. Kornfield started a separate center, Spirit Rock, in California in 1990. Their publications (Goldstein, 1987; Goldstein & Kornfield, 2001; Kornfield, 1993) and those of the people who learned Buddhist mindfulness practice at their centers (Epstein, 2001; Goleman, 1988; Nisker, 1998; Rosenberg, 1999; Salzberg, 1997, 2001), have dramatically influenced American understanding of mindfulness.
- Psychologists, educators, and practitioners outside of religious and formal spiritual traditions offered popular, practical methodologies for generating the self-observation and present-moment awareness that was central to the Eastern approaches to living (Bennett-Goleman, 2001; Burton, 1995; Deikman, 1982; de Mello, 1990; de Ropp, 1968; Palmer, 1995; Tart, 1986, 1994; Tolle, 1999). Much of this work is grounded in the teaching of Gurdjieff (Burton, 1995; Gurdjieff, 1969,

1975; Needleman & Baker, 2000; Nicoll, 1996; Ouspensky, 1971, 1977; Walker, 1969), although the schools devoted to Gurdjieffian systems prefer to stay out of the public spotlight.

- Maslow, Suttich, and Grof coined the term *transpersonal* to describe a new focus for psychological study that concentrated on human experience that transcended individual awareness, and the experience of mindful awareness was investigated as a transpersonal phenomenon (Murphy, 1992; Tart, 1975; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993a; White, 1974).
- The *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* was created in 1960 and the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* in 1969. These periodicals served to document an ongoing cultural conversation about the experience of mindful awareness (Walsh, 1977, 1978).

- Scientifically-trained researchers and psychologists developed the new field of *consciousness studies* and explored levels of awareness beyond ordinary, waking consciousness. Tart coined the term, *altered states of consciousness* (1969), and such states were studied through varied means such as brain-wave study (Green, 1977; Hirai, 1978, 1989) and holotropic breathing (Grof, 1990).

After four decades of exploration and thought, *mindful awareness* was now understood as an *altered state of consciousness*, something remarkably different from the levels of awareness with which people normally lived. A *state of consciousness* was seen as a pattern or system, an arrangement of the parts or aspects of the mind such as memory, evaluation processes, and sense of identity

(Tart, 1986). Although the state–this pattern or system–was fluid and highly individualistic from person to person, it was remarkably stable in the face of everyday surprises. A state was considered to be an *altered* state if "the experiencer feels his consciousness is radically different from the way it functions ordinarily" (Tart, 2000, p. 208).

There were interesting discussions about the number of states available for human experience and their functions (Tart, 2000; see also de Ropp, 1968; Goleman, 1988; Tart, 1986; Wilber, 2000a), and there were important distinctions regarding *higher* states and the *paradigms* from which understandings of states emerged (Tart, 2000). For the purpose of this review–which is to understand the experience of mindful awareness–it was sufficient to use de Ropp's five-state model which fundamentally aligned with Gurdjieff's model (Tart, 1986). Although this model was less discerning about higher states than the models discussed by Goleman, Tart (2000), and Wilber, it had the value of simplicity and agreed with *all* the models about the first three baseline states with which people are most familiar.

Deep sleep without dreams	The First Level
Sleep with Dreams	The Second Level
Waking sleep (identification)	The Third Level
Self-transcendence (self-remembering)	The Fourth Level
Objective Consciousness (cosmic consciousness)	The Fifth Level

(de Ropp, 1968, p. 51)

This model contained a surprise for first-time observers, for de Ropp referred to their normal, waking consciousness as *waking sleep*. He contended that the state of consciousness in which people lived so fully and so successfully was, in fact, an automated, habitual, un-free state in which they were prisoners of their own thinking process. This contention was fully consistent with the thinking of *every* authority in the field. What passed for normal, human awareness was described in various ways, among them: *sleep* (Gurdjieff, 1969, 1975; Ouspensky, 1977; de Mello, 1990), *enslaved attention* (de Ropp, 1968), *consensus trance* (Tart, 1986), and *the trance of ordinary life* (Deikman, 1982). The Third Level of consciousness was regarded as a state of continual *illusion* and *self-deception,* which was referred to as *samara* in Buddhism (Tart, 2000) and *maya* in Hinduism (Smith, 1992). In this state, what felt like self-control and autonomous choice were "largely a mechanical reaction based on . . . conditioning" (Tart, 1986, p. ix), and people's impulses, fears, and imaginings were literally running away with them.

> There is a Zen story about a man riding a horse which is galloping very quickly. Another man, standing alongside the road, yells at him, "Where are you going?" and the man on the horse yells back, "I don't know. Ask the horse." (Hanh, 1987. p. 65)

Mindful awareness–awareness not only of the sights and sounds of normal living, but also *of the one observing these sights and sounds* –was the Fourth Level of consciousness, and, as it expanded and deepened, experiences of objective consciousness (Ouspensky, 1977) or cosmic consciousness (Bucke, 1901/1969; James, 1902/1997) became available. For this review, distinction among the higher states in the Fifth Level (Tart, 2000) was unnecessary. It was

sufficient to draw a sharp distinction *between Levels 1-3 and Levels 4-5*, for it was here that a state of mindful awareness made its appearance. Although not all altered states were equally valuable or helpful–e.g. being emotionally incapacitated is an altered state (Tart, 1986)–the experience of mindful awareness was definitely experienced as a significant shift from the normal, baseline experience of ordinary awareness, which, in contrast, could be described as mind*less*ness (Tart, 1994).

The Experience of Mindful Awareness

Tart (1990) provided a description of mindful awareness that referred to either of the following experiences, or any combination of them:

- A clear, *lucid* quality of awareness of the everyday experiences of life.
- A clear quality of awareness as applied to deeper and more subtle processes of the mind.
- An a*wareness of being aware, in which* some part of the mind "witnesses" or remains aware of the ongoing experience of life.
- A continuous and precise awareness of the process of being aware.

The fundamental nature of the human was described as *original wakefulness* (Chokyi Nyima, 2002), and the experience of mindful awareness was variously described as: *taking hold of our minds* (Nhat Hanh, 1975); *being here-and-now* (Epstein, 2001; Ram Dass, 1971); an experience of *continuous*

consciousness (Ghose, 1993), *witness consciousness* (Wilber, 2000b), and *the vast, empty self behind our many false personalities* (Arjuna, 1998); a *remembrance of self* (Gurdjieff, 1975); the activation of the *observing self* (Deikman, 1982) and the *watcher at the gate* (de Ropp, 1968; *headlessness* (Harding, 2002); and *moment-to-moment awareness* (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

People described the *experience* of mindful awareness in ways that reflected their awareness of their thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, awareness, and their capacity. Some of these descriptions included these phrases: a *profound lucidity and vividness* (Norbu, 1996); *a hard-to-describe quality of existing in a new, real way* (Tart, 1986); *solid like stone or a lightness like floating* (Kornfield, 1993); *allowing the warring and fragmented aspects of ourselves to become friends* (Sogyal, 1994); *a sense of freedom and release and pure emptiness* (Wilber, 2000b); *resting in awareness, no coming, no going* (Ram Dass, 1971); *an almost unbearable love for the world* (Watts, 1973); *like the healing silence that follows a long political speech* (de Ropp, 1968); *a silence that makes everything new* (Krishnamurti, 1988); *spontaneous awe at the sacredness of life and a gratitude for life* (Merton, 1949); *waves of gratitude arising in the mind* (Spretnak, 1993).

Many authors agreed about a fundamental *rightness* to humanity that was revealed through experiences of mindful awareness. The essence of human beings was described repeatedly as an *original, primordial goodness* (Easwaran, 1985; Trungpa, 1984).

Many people witnessed to the beneficial effects of mindful awareness, including the following comments:

- Emotional benefits–*noticing painful emotions instead of remaining unaware of them* (Walsh, 1999); *calm and peacefulness* (Miller, 2000); *capable of great love* (Salzberg, 1997); *release from compulsion* (Das, 1997); *laughter and joyfulness* (Hafiz, 1996).

- Physical benefits–*more brightness and vibrancy in sight* (Tolle, 1999); *like being carried along* (Harding, 2001); *increased strength, energy, and will* (Helminski, 1992; Walsh, 1978); *a sense of freshness* (Rosenberg, 1999); *an energy of health and well-being* (Deikman, 1982; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Spretnak, 1991); and a capacity for *wonderful sensations* (Ouspensky, 1977).

- Mental benefits–*knowledge* (Miller, 2000); *understanding and forgiveness, first to self, then to others* (Salzberg, 1997); *freedom from habitual thinking and activity* (Helminski, 1992).

- Benefits for Awareness–*a slowing down, greater perception* (Levine, 1989); *appreciation and perceptiveness* (Kabat-Zinn, 1990); *the seeing of new possibilities* (S. Suzuki, 2001); *radical openness* (Miller, 1994).

- Benefits for Capacity - *freedom to choose and to act boldly* (Wilber, 2000b); *to bear suffering* (Helminski, 1992); *letting go of control* (Miller 1994); *letting go of striving* (Goldstein, 1987); *being yourself without getting tough about it* (Merton, 1949).

The experience of mindful awareness, although new to America, had touched a human *longing* (de Ropp, 1968) and a *taste* (Wilber, 2000b) for wholeness, freedom, and well-being. In moments of mindful awareness, the process by which people's minds interpreted events was momentarily stilled. This provided an extraordinary opportunity to see more objectively, to act more spontaneously, and to love more wholeheartedly (Kornfield, 1993). Mindfulness appeared to loosen the mind's automatic grip on awareness that kept people prisoners (Needleman, 1991) to their own processes of thought and feeling. It appeared to allow people to expand their frames of reference (Mezirow, 2000) and to source learning that was transformative instead of merely translative (Wilber, 2000b), and, even though it only lasted for brief periods of time (Tart, 1986, 1994), the benefits were clear to those who had experienced it.

A central concern was *how to teach mindful awareness* so that people could more often break loose from the confines of Level 3 awareness and access the possibilities of being awake and aware in their everyday lives.

The Pedagogy of Mindful Awareness

Buddhism as the Dominant Pedagogical Influence

In November, 2002, an Internet search for publications and retreat centers concerned with mindful awareness training resulted in the Google search engine reporting 11,400 hits, of which it selected 1,200 for inspection (it eliminated the others due to repetition of URL addresses). These sites revealed over 140 retreat

centers, mostly in the United States, all but four of which were Buddhist in orientation. In March, 2003, Google reported 50,200 hits on a similar search, of which an estimated 90% included references to Buddhism, *vipassana*, *dharma*, or Zen. This result paralleled the literature available for review and revealed a *significant predominance* of Buddhist orientation in the pedagogy of mindfulness.

In America, Buddhism was the pedagogy of choice when it comes to mindful awareness training. There were other systems designed to educate people about Level 4 consciousness and beyond–for example: Sufism (Helminski, 1992); various forms of Hinduism (Ghose, 1993; Krishnamurti, 1997; Nisargadatta, 1999; Nityananda, 1984; Maharshi); Taoism (Ni, 1989); forms of Buddhism other than Theravadan, such as Dzogchen (Norbu, 1987, 1996); and approaches that integrate or are independent of definite spiritual and religious traditions (Burton, 1995; Deikman, 1982; Leonard & Murphy, 1995; Parsons, 1995; Tolle, 1999, Wilber, 2001b)–but Theravadan Buddhism was the foundation for the great majority of pedagogies available in America. One sign of this dominance was that Level 4 consciousness became known primarily as *mindfulness:* a direct reflection of the practice of *insight meditation* fundamental to the Buddhist pedagogy, a practice also known as *mindfulness* meditation.

It is important to remember this dominance when examining the effectiveness of current pedagogical approaches, because, as will be seen, the monastic origins of Buddhism and its fundamental reliance on meditation, often taught in a retreat setting, generated systemic issues that must be addressed for its contribution to our culture to be sustained and strengthened.

Central Pedagogical Elements

Introduction

The pedagogical systems–Buddhist and non-Buddhist–that offer training in mindful awareness were both subtle and complex, and an extensive explication of their approaches was unnecessary for this review. It was not germane to this study to discuss otherwise interesting pedagogical elements such as: the experience of teaching stories, the role of community support, ethics as a context for learning, or curiosity and inquiry as a basis for learning–all of which are central to many of the pedagogical traditions mentioned here. Three elements of mindful awareness training in general, and Buddhist mindfulness training in particular, *were* important to this study: (a) the avowed purpose of transforming the daily life experience of participants, (b) the experiential orientation, and (c) the fundamental reliance on regular *withdrawal* from the stimulation of everyday life.

A Purpose to Transform Everyday Life

While there were practitioners whose primary aim was to experience mindful awareness and escape the suffering involved in day-to-day living, the great majority of Western practitioners and educators were concerned with emulating people like Gandhi–whose engagement with the circumstances of his life had transformed the political landscape of India and Great Britain–and Nhat Hanh–the Vietnamese Zen master who was nominated by Martin Luther King, Jr. for the Nobel Peace Prize. The purpose of mindful awareness training was expressed in various ways: *a concentration on the usual everyday routine* (S.

Suzuki, 2001), *living moments fully and completely* (Kabat-Zinn, 1994), *engaging one's life with heart and loving-kindness* (Kornfield, 1993), *bringing peace to the corner of the world where one lives* (Nhat Hanh, 1991), and *living each moment wholeheartedly* (Katagiri, 1988).

An Experiential Orientation

Given the nature of the pedagogical problem–that whenever people were living their daily lives with Level 3 awareness, they *didn't know* that they were asleep (Tart, 1986) and they *didn't need* Level 4 awareness to get through their day (Tart, 1994)–the only education that worked was experiential. Mindfulness training *necessarily required* people to *experience* a shift of awareness from Level 3 to Level 4, for they could only learn that they had been asleep by first waking up! This problem was intensified by a process of *consensus consciousness* (Tart, 1994): a pervasive pressure at all levels of culture to maintain a state of Level 3 awareness, which was considered the *normal* state of being.

Practitioners and educators of mindful awareness were well aware of the critical distinctions that Tart (2001) drew when developing his pedagogical approach to what he called *mind science:*

> Scientism ≠ Science
> Religion ≠ Spirituality
> Belief ≠ Direct Experience

Teachers realized that, in the absence of direct experience of mindful awareness, people confused actually *being* mindful with: *talking about* mindfulness, *developing theories* about mindfulness, *sharing stories* of other people's experience of mindfulness, *envisioning and planning* to be mindful,

being obedient to people who promised them mindful awareness, and *undertaking practices* that might lead to mindful awareness (de Mello, 1990; Kornfield, 2000; Parsons, 1995; Tart, 1994). This self-deceptive capacity, a characteristic of Level 3 awareness, derailed people in their sincere search for mindfulness training, and resulted in patterns of behavior that de Ropp humorously described as the Six Catches*:* the talk-think syndrome, the starry-eyed syndrome, the false-messiah syndrome, the personal salvation syndrome, the Sunday-go-to-meeting syndrome, and the hunt-the-guru syndrome (1968).

It was not difficult either to *be* mindfully aware or, once in that state of awareness, to *do* whatever one was doing in everyday life. What was difficult was to *remember* that such a state of awareness was a possibility (Tart, 1986), to avoid the automatic tendency to *identify* with the automatic thinking process of the human mind that sweeps one away in musings about the past or imagination about the future (Harding, 2002; Tolle, 1999). In order to help people experience mindful awareness in their everyday lives, it was necessary to have them withdraw from the stimulation of daily existence and from the cultural pressure to stay asleep.

Cycles of Withdrawal and Re-entry

In the fifth century B.C., Gautama, frustrated with his lack of progress toward enlightenment through traditional Hindu practices, sat under a tree until, in his own words, he *woke up.* The root word for *buddha* means *to wake up* (Nhat Hanh, 1987), and, over the next 60 years, Gautama developed a pedagogy for teaching this *waking up* to others–in both a monastic setting and in the midst of

everyday life (Armstrong, 2001). Central to this pedagogy was a regular, strategic withdrawal from the stimulation of everyday life, creating a temporary *learning laboratory* in which, over time, mindful awareness could be experienced so fully that people could re-engage their daily lives with this new level of awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Tart, 2001).

This withdrawal was the practice of meditation, of which there were two principal types: *concentration* (*samatha)*–the development of present-moment awareness through focused concentration–and *insight* (*vipassana)*–the development of present-moment awareness through real-time observation of one's own mental workings, feelings, and physical sensations (Goleman, 1988; Gunaratana, 1991; Tart, 2001). Meditative techniques focused attention on all parts of human functioning in order to generate the experience of *being here now*: e.g., following or counting the breath (Rosenberg, 1999); moving slowly with awareness (Nhat Hanh, 1991); visualizing images or symbols (de Ropp, 1968); focusing thinking by mentally repeating sentences (*gathas*) related to current activity (Nhat Hanh, 1975) or concentrating on mental problems (*koans*) that were apparently self-contradictory (D. Suzuki, 1986); and *metta* meditations (Schwartz, 1996) that expanded the feelings of connection and love (Kornfield, 1993).

Insight meditation, also known as *mindfulness* meditation, became the most widely practiced form of meditation within the Buddhist pedagogy. In numerous publications, educators and practitioners bore witness to their experience with insight meditation (Schwartz, 1996; Walsh, 1977, 1978; Wilber, 2000b) and guided people into this experience, encouraging them to seek out

retreat centers where teachers could provide personal instruction (Braza, 1997; Dhiravamsa, 1990; Goldstein, 1987; Gunaratana, 2001; Nhat Hanh, 1993; Kornfield, 1993; Kornfield & Breiter, 2001; Levine, 1989).

The purpose of all this activity was to generate a significant enough experience during withdrawal from everyday living, so that the experience of mindful awareness would *extend* or *generalize* (Tart, 1986, 1990) into the everyday experience of people when they opened their eyes after meditating or returned home from a mindfulness retreat. It was at this point–re-entry into daily life–that other pedagogical devices were employed. Often, they were extensions of what was used in meditation or while on retreat, such as: mentally repeating statements related to the current activity, following the inhalation and exhalation of breath while doing whatever was to be done, using the body's senses to engage as completely as possible with whatever was happening in the moment, adopting physical practices like entering a room with a certain foot or opening a door with a certain hand, and implementing rituals to begin and end the day (de Ropp, 1968; Nhat Hanh, 1992; Tart, 1990, 1994). The problem, of course, was to *remember* to do these things (Tart, 1986). To this end, practitioners advocated making changes in daily routines like inserting gaps in one's schedule, listening to music, slowing down, and taking jobs with less mental and external stimulation (de Ropp, 1968; Nhat Hanh, 1975; Kornfield, 1993; Miller, 2000).

During the past 35 years, many thousands of people read about mindfulness, practiced meditation of one form or another, or attended retreats where awareness practice was offered. Mindfulness was becoming more popular.

Challenges and Possibilities for Mindful Awareness Pedagogy

Popularization and Pedagogical Challenges

A Widespread Application of Mindfulness Technique

During the past three decades, many practitioners (in addition to the authors and fields already cited), who had been exposed to the experience of mindful awareness, and who then had engaged with their field from the perspective of that experience, developed a wide variety of mindfulness applications. Some examples of these applications included the following publications and research studies.

In the field of psychology, the extension of humanistic psychology into transpersonal psychology (Tart, 1975; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993a) spawned a wide application of mindful awareness to the treatment of conditions as varied as depression (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002), alcoholism (Alexander, 1997), eating disorders (Kristeller & Hallett, 1999), aggression within the context of mental illness (Singh, Wahler, Adkins, & Myers, 2003), and the matter of general psychological health and well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003). In addition to the development of a therapeutic modality based on mindfulness (Segal, et al.), the experience of mindfulness has sparked research into the healing capacity of the psychological therapist in secular practice (Hollomon, 2000).

In medicine, Kabat-Zinn's pioneering work with mindfulness-based stress reduction at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center (1990) inspired a host of studies examining the effect of mindfulness-based programs on cancer,

heart disease, skin conditions, recovery from injury, brain disorders, chronic pain, and on medical practice in general (Bonadonna, 2000; Santorelli, 1999). Criticism of his approach notwithstanding (Bishop, 2002), Kabat-Zinn's work was significantly influential in that it provided training for many practitioners who duplicated his methodology (Roth & Stanley, 2002).

In education, a prototype of the *contemplative practitioner* was developed (Miller, 2000), research projects were undertaken to explore the relationship between mindfulness-based meditation and education (Trunnell, 1996), and–of particular interest to this study–a researcher tracked the experience of teachers who augmented their classroom experience with regular meditation and an in-class practice of following the movement of their breath as they taught (Solloway, 1999).

Researchers used mindfulness practice as a foundational element of new qualitative research methodologies (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Heron & Reason, 1997; Kramer, 1999; Kramer & O'Fallon, 1997) and in action research devoted to corporate performance (Torbert, 1991). The practice of Zen was applied to corporate management (Low, 1976). Practitioners explored the relationship between mindfulness and creativity: e.g., as applied to the process of writing (Edelstein, 2001; Goldberg, 1986, 1990) and in regard to the enhanced connection between people that expanded self-awareness brings (Montuori & Conti, 1993), and writers both scientific and popular extended brainwave research into the experience of mindful awareness (Cade, 1989; Hirai, 1978, 1989; Wise, 1997, 2002).

Challenges for Mindfulness Pedagogy

Perhaps not surprisingly, this popularity generated, revealed, and even contributed to the development of challenges faced by this pedagogy for mindful awareness. There were several types of difficulties: exchanging discussion and theory for experience; using the word *mindfulness* to describe related, but fundamentally different experiences; confusing trans-rational experiences with pre-rational (Wilber, 2001a); identifying mindful awareness with the practice of meditation; and living in a culture that is fundamentally insensitive to the experience of mindful awareness.

Exchanging thought for experience

There's a warning in Buddhist literature about not mistaking the finger pointing at the moon for the moon itself. The growing popularity of mindful awareness–the familiarity of people with phrases like be here now, living in the moment, and mindfulness–has made it easy for people to substitute talking about mindful awareness for the actual experience. The human mind loves to discuss, analyze, rationalize, and theorize, and practitioners were cautionary about the human tendency to mistake reflection for practice. The experience of mindful awareness was not the same as thoughts about mindful awareness (Wilber, 2000b), and understanding mindfulness was not the same as actually experiencing it (Tart, 1986). The map was not the territory, and popularization brought many, interesting maps to the table for discussion.

Changing the definition of the word mindfulness

There was an influential, but confusing, use of the term mindfulness by Harvard psychologist, Langer. In her many research projects, and in her two books written for the popular market, Langer (1989, 1997) contrasted "mindfulness" with "mindlessness." She maintained that the latter is understood as (a) being entrapped by the category within which you are thinking, (b) behaving in ways that are automatic and not freely chosen, and (c) appreciating only a single perspective as a basis for action. Mindfulness, therefore, was characterized by the opposite of these characteristics: (a) the capacity to create new categories of thought; (b) openness to new information that leads to new behavior; and (c) an awareness of more than one perspective, more than one way of looking at a situation. To illustrate this understanding, she reported a number of experiments conducted on a variety of subjects, including elderly residents of retirement facilities, university students, and business professionals. The focus of these experiments was to demonstrate that people can develop new ways of thinking, perceiving, and acting when they are presented with circumstances that require them to do so.

When Langer used the word, "mindfulness," she did so in a way that can be characterized as *greater general awareness*. This usage of the term was significantly different from that employed by all the other authors cited in this review. Langer acknowledged the difference she sensed between her use of the word and its traditional meaning. She mentioned "not being fully trained in Eastern thought," and she declared, "I leave it to others to tease out the

similarities and differences between the two concepts of mindfulness" (1989, p. 78-79).

Langer's approach was influential; it was adopted by people as notable as Sternberg (2000), who characterized mindfulness as "the idea that good thinking depends on a habitual tendency to approach problems in a thoughtful and non-impulsive way (Langer, 1989)" (Sternberg, 1999, p. 419.). Langer, Sternberg, and others inspired by their work subtly, used the word *mindfulness* in a subtle, but significantly different way. This diluted cultural understanding of the experiential nature of the term. Mindfulness, in this regard, was simply *being more thoughtful or flexible in one's thinking*. Considering that people were perfectly capable of thoughtfulness and flexibility in the state of waking sleep defined as Third Level awareness (de Ropp, 1968; Tart, 1986), this application of mindfulness confused cultural understanding of the experience of mindful awareness.

Confusing the pre-rational and the trans-rational

Transpersonal psychology added a third category of human development–the trans-personal–to the existing categories of pre-personal and personal. Applying this to individual human development (setting aside for the moment the matter of collective development), this fourth wave of psychology (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993b) maintained that human beings began their lives in a pre-rational state, proceed to a rational state, and then had the possibility of experiencing trans-rational states of awareness. Wilber offered a helpful distinction that he called the pre-trans fallacy (Wilber, 2001a). He maintained that, because pre-

rational experiences (e.g., childhood innocence, floods of emotion, and lack of differentiation between self and object) and trans-rational experiences (e.g., aware of being aware, sense of connectedness between self and others) are both non-rational in nature, it was possible for people to confuse trans-rational experiences with pre-rational experiences. This confusion led, unfortunately, to several difficulties.

When people failed to distinguish pre-rational experiences (e.g., instinctual sexual excitement) from trans-rational experiences (e.g., a profound sense of respect and love for a teacher or a student), unresolved personality conflicts and immaturity were sometimes confused with enlightened behavior (Kornfield, 2000; Wilber, 2001a). It was for this reason that the Buddhist tradition maintained that mindful awareness should always be taught within a system of ethics (Kornfield, 1993). When trans-rational experiences were mistaken for pre-rational experiences, well-meaning parents, friends, therapists, and pastors often failed to recognize that these experiences were *spiritual emergencies* as opposed to psychological breakdowns (S. Grof, 2000). This situation led to more careful refinement of understanding and response to non-rational experiences (C. Grof, 1993).

Furthermore, a failure to distinguish pre-rational states from trans-rational led to an under-valuing of the ego-strength required to take one's place as a mature, contributing adult in everyday life (Schwartz, 1996; Wilber, 2001a). The experience of mindful awareness included feelings of grief and fear as well as peace and joy. From a trans-rational perspective, these difficult feelings were

understandable as gateways to compassion and courage in the face of everyday life conditions that need addressing. From a pre-rational perspective, these difficult feelings were easily overwhelming. The reason that teachers of mindful awareness stressed *engagement* with the world was because they realized that Level 4 awareness developed human capacities for compassion, courage, and discernment that were needed in order to face and transform suffering on an individual and collective level (Nhat Hanh, 1987; Sogyal, 1994). Failure to appreciate the *trans*-rational nature of mindful awareness led people to *disengage* from their daily lives whenever that engagement brought painful feelings instead of peaceful ones.

Identifying mindful awareness with the practice of meditation

Leading teachers of mindfulness clearly stated that the purpose of meditation was to empower people to generate mindful awareness in everyday life (Nhat Hanh, 1975; Kornfield, 1993; Tart, 2001). Several factors, systemic to the Buddhist paradigm of practice and to its meeting of modern American culture, mitigated against the effectiveness of this pedagogical strategy.

First, there was the too-easy identification of the *experience* of mindfulness with the *practice* of mindfulness (insight or *vipassana*) meditation. This strategic withdrawal from the stimulation of daily life–intended to be a temporary laboratory for the generation of mindful awareness which was then to be taken into an engagement with daily life–became, for many people, *the primary time in their daily lives* when mindful awareness was experienced. When influential Buddhist teachers–in an effort to help students understand that what

they were experiencing in meditation was to be experienced in their daily lives– spoke of making daily life a meditation (Gunaratana, 1991) or when they stated that when mindfulness was present, meditation was present (Nhat Hanh, 1993), it was easy for modern, Western students to believe that the object of mindfulness was to meditate *instead of* being mindfully aware in the conduct of their daily activities. As a result, people developed a belief that *to become mindful*, they had to *withdraw* from their daily lives into meditation, either at home or on retreat.

This identification of mindful awareness with meditation led naturally to a separation of everyday life (filled with distracting stimulation) from mindful experience (which occurred during meditation). There has been a tendency in *vipassana* practice toward aloofness and lack of emotionality (Helminski, 1992; Schwartz, 1996; Tart, 1986), and some Buddhist teachers have addressed this tendency by emphasizing the development of heart, passion, and engagement (Nhat Hanh, 1987; Kornfield, 1993). When people viewed meditation as an *escape* or a *corrective* to the rigors and emotional struggle of daily life, when they regarded a *retreat* as a *relief* from the trials of everyday living, they separated their experience of mindful awareness from the activities of their daily lives.

Furthermore, there was an inherent clash between the pedagogical requirement for frequent and sustained meditative practice (as a regular part of daily life and on periodic, prolonged retreats) and the demands of modern Western living that afforded little time for withdrawal. For nearly everyone, and especially for people who are engaged in positions of influence in our society, the demands of work and family were significant, and *relatively few people could*

invest enough time in meditation and retreat to have that experience of mindful awareness extend itself into their daily lives in a sustained fashion. This was a fundamental limitation of the pedagogy that relied so intensely on the experience of strategic withdrawal from daily life (Schwartz, 1996; Tart, 1990, 1994).

Furthermore, when people participated in retreats, the learning environment was so completely different from their day-to-day lives, that it was often the case that within a short time of returning home, the capacity for mindful awareness–so evident during the retreat–significantly or even completely dissipated (Tart, 1990; Walsh, 1978).

Living in a culture insensitive to mindful awareness

In spite of the rapid expansion of publications concerned with mindfulness, retreat centers providing mindfulness training, and the extension of mindful awareness into many sectors of life, people interested in generating mindful awareness in their everyday lives lived in a culture that was profoundly unaware and unappreciative of the value of mindful awareness. Kornfield (2001b) shared a story about an experience Ram Dass had while visiting India. Ram Dass walked from a retreat center to a nearby village to purchase some supplies at one of the village stores. As he approached the counter, the clerk took one look at him and said with a smile, "For you, today, there is no charge." This clerk, and the people of this culture, appreciated the experience of mindful awareness: they knew it when it was present, and they respected and valued its presence. Our culture provided little, if any, support for people who attempted to experience mindful awareness in the midst of everyday life.

Attractors, Split-attention, and Pedagogical Possibilities

Attractors and Emergence of New Possibilities of Consciousness

Theorists extended the understanding of *states* of consciousness into *structures* or *stages* of consciousness, following a tradition of thinking that included the work of philosophers and theologians (e.g., Hegel, Bergson, Teilhard de Chardin, and Gebser) and integrated the individual experience of mindful awareness with the collective expansion of consciousness for humanity as a whole (Combs, 1996; Feuerstein, 1995; Ghose, 1973; Tart, 2000; Wilber, 2000a, 2001a). They concluded that developmental forces were active within the apparently chaotic fabric of existence (Briggs & Peat, 1999), and that these forces were integral to the emergence of the possibility for mindful awareness in human life on both an individual level (during the span of a person's lifetime) and a collective level (over time, for humanity as a whole). A complete explication of consciousness theory was not appropriate for this review, but three theoretical constructs were illuminating: (a) mindful awareness as part of an emergence of consciousness, (b) the relationship between *attractors* and reality, and (c) the interdependence of individual and collective human development.

Mindful awareness is part of a larger emergence of consciousness

Theorists postulated that within life itself there existed a creative, evolutionary force–a synthesizing medium (Hegel, 1967), an élan vital (Bergson, 1975)–responsible for the emergence of a new form of consciousness available to human beings–an integral consciousness (Gebser, 1985), a supermind (Ghose, 1973), pulling and/or pushing humanity to an omega point (Teilhard de Chardin,

1965). This force exerted a pressure on the extraordinarily sensitive bodies of human beings that resulted in breakthroughs of new levels of consciousness (Feuerstein, 1995). These breakthroughs were part of an ontological thrust for greater consciousness in which Spirit becomes conscious of itself; this didn't guarantee a successful result, but it offered grounds for hope that solutions to the self-destructive behavior of human beings were possible (Combs, 1996; Feuerstein, 1995; Wilber, 2000a). The emergence of mindful awareness in our culture during the past 45 years can be viewed as part of this larger emergence of consciousness in humanity as a whole.

Attractors function in relationship to reality

The integration of chaos theory (Briggs & Peat, 1999) with consciousness theory included the notion of attractors, patterns or states of activity into which systems tended to fall; these attractors were like basins into which marbles rolled when they come into contact with the downward sloping edges of the basin (Combs, 1996). Mindful awareness pedagogy could be understood as relying upon one type of attractors–nurtured during periods of meditation and retreat–to exert an awakening pull on human consciousness in order to overcome another type of attractors–the automatic, meaning-making activity of the human mind–which pulled human beings into waking sleep. This was another way to frame the human struggle to move from Third Level awareness to Fourth Level awareness. The critical application of this theory to this study was the fact that both types of attractors operated in relation to reality, to the real-time events of the everyday lives of human beings. It was in relation to daily events that attractors exerted

their pull. This reflected the emphasis of mindful awareness teachers on engagement with reality (Nhat Hanh, 1975; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Kornfield, 1993; Tart, 1994), an emphasis that was reflected in a saying attributed to the Sarmouni Brotherhood, the (actual?) sect with whom Gurdjieff supposedly studied:

> There is no God but Reality.
> To seek Him elsewhere
> Is the action of the Fall. (Tart, 1986, p. 21)

Individual development and collective development are interdependent

The interdependence of individual and collective human development was fundamental to theories of consciousness (Wilber, 2000a). It provided a framework in which an individual person's experience of waking up was a contribution to the possibility of a global awakening spoken of by teachers of mindful awareness (Nhat Hanh, 1986; Helminski, 1992; Miller, 1994). This was illustrated especially well with regard to the contribution to human development made through the life and work of Ghose:

> The idea that a few individuals, or even a single person, can break evolutionary ground for the entire human species seems at first glance, to be unwarranted . . . .How . . . could it be possible for Sri Ghose and the Mother, sitting in their ashram in south India, to open an evolutionary gateway for the rest of humankind?...The answer . . . may in part have to do with the idea . . . that the direction of the evolutionary ascent is already contained in matter itself. From this point of view, Sri Ghose and the Mother were simply vehicles, and as such were, in a sense, test cases for the entire species. (Combs, 1996, p. 149)

Split-attention and Pedagogical Possibilities

Split-attention as introduced by Gurdjieff

The technique of split-attention was central to this study, and a clear understanding of its background was important to this review. G.I. Gurdjieff was

one of the most interesting and pivotal figures in the esoteric tradition. He reportedly studied with the mythical (and perhaps Sufi-oriented) Sarmouni Brotherhood, somewhere in the Middle East, before emerging in the first half of the twentieth century as a teacher concerned with liberating people from the machine thinking to which they were prone. Although Gurdjieff produced one very accessible book (1969), he intentionally made the rest of his writings extremely difficult to understand, and his thinking was expressed primarily through the writings of others (Bennett, 1973; Burton, 1995; Needleman & Baker, 2000; Nicoll, 1996; Ouspensky, 1977). Gurdjieff recognized the fundamental sleepiness of ordinary waking life, and his method for helping people achieve the self-observation inherent to being awake– a Third Level state of consciousness in which people were aware of being aware–was a practice he called self-remembering. In this practice, people deliberately split off a small part of their awareness which they then used to monitor their experience while they continued to do what they were doing (Burton, 1995; Ouspensky, 1977; Tart, 1994).

The practice of split-attention was essential to what Gurdjieff called the Fourth Way, a time-honored focus on spirituality in the midst of everyday life that has always been a focus of Sufism.

> The Fourth Way is a term introduced by G.I. Gurdjieff to describe the spiritual path of someone who lives and works within society, in contrast to the way of the ascetic, the monk, and the yogi, who traditionally separate themselves from ordinary life . . . the Fourth Way, however, has been the primary way within the Islamic world for fourteen centuries. (Helminski, 1992, p. 41)
>
> Gurdjieff's path is primarily a matter of mindfulness in everyday life. He taught, to the best of my knowledge, almost nothing in the way of formal, sitting meditation practices as we would ordinarily categorize them–although they were introduced

> to some extent by some of his students later. His theory was that the place in which you create all your trouble is ordinary life, and so that is both the place you need mindfulness the most and the best possible place to learn it. (Tart, 1994, pp. 35-36)

Gurdjieff's technique of split-attention was described by Tart in this way:

> Deliberately split the arrow of attention, so that, no matter what happens, you never allow all your attention to be taken by anything, be it external stimulus or internal reaction. A small amount of it is always kept in the role of observer. (Tart, 2001, p. 118)

This role of *observer* is exactly the same as the capacity of being a *witness* to one's life (Wilber, 2000b) or having the faculty of a *watchman at the gate* (de Ropp, 1968), and it allows people to live with wide-open eyes in the midst of their everyday lives, responding to life as it really is, instead of what their wandering thoughts deem it to be.

> I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don't even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child–our own two eyes. All is a miracle. (Nhat Hanh, 1975, p. 13)

The practice of Gurdjieffian technique remained relatively unknown, primarily, because the practitioners of his methods, following a tradition often associated with Sufism, believed that learning mindful awareness required a curiosity and exertion of effort that their secrecy inspired in potential students (Gurdjieff, 1969). This study was undertaken with respect for the sensitivities of Gurdjieff himself and his current students, and it was not intended to popularize the esoteric teachings associated with Gurdjieff. However, this study did intend to align itself with the spirit of people like Ouspensky (1971, 1977), Needleman (2000), Tart (1986, 1990, 1994), and Burton (1995) who saw in Gurdjieff's work

significant benefit for humanity and who endeavored to make accessible for others helpful parts of the tradition carried forward by Gurdjieff.

The possibility of an augmented pedagogy

The practice of split-attention was significant in that it allowed people to use the events of their everyday lives as the laboratory for generating mindful awareness. It was originally intended to aid self-observation, but it was also possible to use split-attention to lessen or even halt the automatic process of identification with the mind's thinking process, and thus deliver someone to an immediate experience of mindful awareness in the midst of whatever everyday activity they were doing. This represented a significant addition to the current pedagogies of mindful awareness training that required people to withdraw from everyday life in order to generate an experience of mindful awareness that could then be taken back into everyday existence.

Paradigms advance assumptions about the social world, how science should be conducted, and what constitutes legitimate problems, solutions, and criteria of proof (Firestone, Gioia & Pietre, and Kuhn as cited in Creswell, 2003). They shape research by addressing six questions:

1. What do we believe about the nature of reality?

Learnings from the Case Studies

Having explored the individual experiences of the co-researchers, the focus now turns o the learnings we experienced in common. We began this study with a core question: *what happens when people link mindful awareness to everyday activities?* During the 90 days of the inquiry, the four co-researchers

engaged in 70 hours of conversation, 95% of it face-to-face. We explored this core question–and the sub-questions listed in the Introduction–by undertaking repeated cycles of experience and reflection, in which we kept asking ourselves questions like: When were we mindfully aware? How did we know? What did it feel like when it happened? What happened to our thinking process when it occurred? What did we notice physically, and what was its impact upon our awareness of our daily lives at work and at home?

Our response to the core question will be addressed in detail. First, it will be helpful to briefly answer the sub-questions and indicate where further information about their subject matter can be found. The sub-questions, listed in the Introduction, were:

- *What was the participants' previous experience of mindful awareness?* The three co-researchers were familiar with the experience of mindful awareness, but previous reading and retreat experience had left them believing that mindful awareness either was too difficult to generate in everyday life or it was something that was only experienced in specialized circumstances like retreats or in extensive periods of meditation. I had been practicing linking mindful awareness with split-attention for eighteen months, but I had been doing so in isolation and was experiencing doubt about the efficacy of this practice for others. Further individual details are available in the case studies.
- *What was their estimate of how often they experienced spontaneously waking up each day (Tart's first form of mindful experience), and how*

long did these periods of mindfulness last?

The experience of waking up spontaneously in our daily lives happened quickly and sustained itself throughout the inquiry period. We continued to experience this awakening many times a day; although the duration of mindful awareness was often a few seconds, we all experienced extended periods of wakefulness, and, by the end of the inquiry, we were focusing our practice of split-attention on *extending* the moments of waking up when they occurred. More details are available in each case study.

- *How did other people, considered authoritative in the field, describe their mindful experience and its benefits?*

  The descriptions of the experience of mindful awareness, available in the Literature Review, were virtually the same as those reported by the four of us who participated in the study, with the exception of some extraordinary experiences of Fifth Level consciousness and beyond that were reported by masters in the field.

- *What changes were there in the consistency and quality of mindful moments in the participants' everyday lives?*

  There were *significant* changes in our experience of mindful awareness. The three co-researchers, whose experience had been limited to occasional moments in unusual situations, found their daily lives filled with moments of mindfulness, and I found a greater capacity to extend mindful moments than I had been able to generate

practicing on my own. Further descriptions of our experiences are available in the case studies and in the material below.

- *What differences were there in the everyday experience of the six specific everyday activities that participants were linking to mindfulness? How effective were each of the six activities in calling people to mindfulness in the midst of everyday life?*

  All of us found that certain of the split-attention activities were more helpful to us than others; we each had our favorites. Furthermore, we found that we developed split-attention practices to link mindful awareness to *other* daily activities that were central to our lives. Further details about our idiosyncratic adaptations of the split-attention technique are available in the case studies.

- *What was the impact of this program on the overall quality of participants' lives?*

  At the closing meeting of our inquiry, we agreed that the impact on our lives had been profound, so much so that we committed to continue our journal-writing and conference calls to support its further development in our everyday existence. Further details are available in the case studies above and in the benefits section below.

Now, in response to the core question of this inquiry–*what happens when people link mindful awareness to everyday activities?*–we generated a lot of information. Our individual answers to this core question are expressed in the

case studies above. This material will be summarized below in four sections: (a) our experience of mindful awareness; (b) the benefits we realized from that experience; (c) themes that emerged during the inquiry; and (d) what we learned about creating the conditions for everyday mindfulness to occur. These sections are written with the case study material in mind, and, the discussion is extended only when a particular subject has not already been presented in detail within an individual case.

Our Experience of Mindful Awareness

The categories below–physical, mental, emotional, awareness, and capacity–are somewhat artificial. When, for example, does an experience stop being *physical* and start being *mental*? The categories are not intended to be rigorous, but merely to serve as gathering points for the descriptions of our experience.

Experiencing it Physically

When moments of mindful awareness arrived, they usually were accompanied by an immediate sense of *refreshment*, as if awakening from a nap. We were immediately more relaxed, like there was suddenly less to do, less to fret over, less to be accomplished. It was like a sudden, warm, summer breeze, bringing the scent of blossoms or the taste of salt from the sea, waking us up. It was often accompanied by a profound sense of *peacefulness*.

Also, there was a greater alertness, something we described as a *coming to our senses*; hearing, taste, touch, smell, and sight suddenly *switched on* and

became highly sensitive. Furthermore, this greater *sensuality* seemed to be a vehicle for *nourishment*–as if the real, daily events of our lives, when experienced with mindful awareness, somehow *fed and nurtured* us.

We also noticed a physical sense of *slowing down*. This was more than simple relaxation; it had the quality of time itself slowing slightly: people didn't pass by as quickly, sights and sounds seemed to linger. It was like there was more time available in the moment, as if the moment in which we were mindful had somehow *stretched or extended itself*. There was nowhere to go and nothing to do. We felt free, in the moment, to just *be* with whatever was happening. We spoke of this as a sense of *settling* down, being *grounded*, of *coming home* to where we belonged.

At the same time, and somewhat in contrast, we often felt a physical *lightness* in these moments: both a sense that there was more illumination (things were visibly more clearer, more dimensional, more in focus) and that the people, circumstance, and situations of the present moment seemed less heavy, demanding, and burdensome. Our bodies felt more limber: attuned to their surroundings, yet liberated from their moorings.

Experiencing it Emotionally

Our initial experiences of mindful awareness were often filled with a significant increase in *enjoyment*. We laughed a lot–with an easy, full, and textured sense of humor, in which everyone had room for their own experience of joy. We felt *delight* in many things, and, often, we experienced a spontaneous

surge of *heartfelt appreciation* for the people and circumstances that were part of a given moment.

In the third week of our inquiry, each of us had an unexpected eruption of painful emotions: anger, sorrow, jealously, loneliness, and fear. This led to one of our most profound learnings: that mindful awareness brought us into *reality:* our *real* feelings about what was *really* happening to us. We had a profound insight into the tendency–so strong in our culture–to associate mindful awareness with *pleasant* feelings (peacefulness, joy, gratitude, etc.) and to believe that *withdrawing* from the pain and chaos of daily life was necessary in order to be mindfully aware.

We found that when we remembered to apply split-attention in those painful moments, we were able to *feel* those painful moments without being overwhelmed by them. In time–often just a few minutes–the extreme pain of the emotions dissipated, leaving in its wake an authentic, human feeling such as sorrow or grief. Often, courageous and wise choices came out of such moments, a direct result of being mindfully aware in the face of whatever was happening.

We each discovered a release of compulsiveness and competitiveness, a freedom from the driven sense of *having* to do something: including any sense of *obligation*, *guilt*, *doing something because it was good for you,* or having to *improve* yourself or *compare yourself* favorably with others. This resulted in less habitual behavior and a greater sense of patience, forgiveness, and trust–with ourselves and with others.

Experiencing it Mentally

When mindful awareness occurred, there often seemed be a halt to the thinking process. There was a sense of the mind taking a breath, a *very full emptiness,* in which we were present to whatever was happening without the usual mental chatter of judgment, associations, and imaginings about the future. It was an unnerving, yet stimulating sense of *unknowing:* as if we knew nothing and yet somehow knew everything, all at the same time. This was a *word-less* space that was indefinable, yet undeniable.

As if by magic, solutions, ideas, insights, and choices would *suddenly emerge*. Over the course of the inquiry, each of us found a greater trust in this emergence, and we all relied on it for clarity of thought and penetrating insights that favored simplicity and directness. The mind's imaginative powers seemed to relax for a moment, and complex situations suddenly seemed understandable and a path forward was suddenly clear. A wisdom or discernment would occasionally seem to *come through us* when we were mindfully aware, even if it only lasted for a few seconds.

We also noticed that, in moments of mindful awareness, we often remembered *other* moments in which we had also been mindful. It seemed to be a case of *like remembering like*, and a lot of our childhood memories of being mindful came to us in this way. It was as if the *experience* of being mindful in a particular moment somehow linked itself to the memory of other experiences, and those past memories were fresh and present.

Impact on Awareness

Awareness of ourselves

The more we experienced being awake and aware in the midst of our daily lives, the more we noticed that we were gradually becoming more aware of who we were, what we wanted, and what we were going to do. At our closing meeting, it was obvious how much each of us had filled out in terms of our presence and our ease within ourselves. Additionally, we had all made decisions about our lives that were changing things in significant ways.

It seemed to us that our *individuality emerged* as we became more mindful day-to-day. We slowly became more *defined*: our longings and our choices were clearer, and we were freer to pursue our deepest desires without embarrassment or hesitation. We trusted the ground on which we individually stood.

Awareness of others

Split-attention required objects on which to put our awareness, and, in our daily lives, often these objects were other people. Putting our attention on others quickly gave way to being far more aware of them, and greater awareness appeared to result in greater intimacy, connectedness, and appreciation of the multitude of people in our lives.

During the three months of the inquiry, each of us was pulled into more honest relationships with others, and we experienced a deepening of our compassion for others and our desire to serve them by sharing what we were learning. This desire resulted in some significant decisions by each of us that took us forward into the future.

Awareness of "more"

Each of us had moments of touching and being touched by a sense of the larger forces that shape our lives. Often, we spoke about the sacredness of what we felt, the spaciousness that we sensed between us and around us. Among our group, we had a fairly wide range of belief systems–including existential atheism and new age spirituality–but, when we stuck to describing our experience instead of discussing it, we had many moments of sensing a vastness that would fill up the room in which we were sitting. Our usual response was to sit in silence.

The experience of mindful awareness appeared to be *catching.* If one of us woke up, the others soon followed. We talked about how we could see it happen for each other, and seeing it in someone else simultaneously generated it in oneself. It seemed to have a *life of its own,* and when it caught one of us, it quickly got all of us.

The Benefits of being Mindfully Aware

It is impossible not to repeat below what has been said above, for we learned that *to experience* mindful awareness is to *benefit* from the experience. The list below is intended to provide a summary-at-a-glance of the beneficial outcomes of our three months of everyday mindfulness practice. As already stated, the categories are somewhat artificial and simply provide a convenient way to present the list.

Physical Benefits

- Slowing down.
- Relaxation and ease.

- Release from internal driven-ness.
- Sense of lowered heart rate and blood pressure (not actually measured).
- More relaxed sleep.
- Enhanced sensuality and sharpening of all senses.
- Enhanced pleasure in eating and drinking.
- Flexibility and freedom of movement.
- Greater sexual enjoyment.
- Increased awareness of physical needs.
- Expanded motivation to care for self.
- Release from compulsion and habit.
- Significant increase in energy.

Emotional Benefits

- Awakening of authentic feeling.
- Increased capacity to feel painful emotions without being overwhelmed by them.
- Dissipation of feelings like fear, anger, irritation, anxiety, resentment, and loneliness.
- Strengthening of feelings like compassion, love, awe, wonder, sorrow, grief, gratitude, and joy.
- Greater emotional maturity.
- Greater intensity of feeling.

- Increased self-confidence and trust.
- Sense of connection to people and things outside of ourselves.
- Sense of aliveness.
- Sense of refreshment and delight in whatever moment was happening.
- Increase in curiosity and eagerness.

Mental Benefits

- Mental clarity.
- Accuracy of perception.
- Release from mental chatter.
- Relief from the flood of memories and imaginings about the future.
- Development of a still, calm center.
- Discernment, wisdom, and understanding.
- Insight, solutions, perception of new possibilities.
- Strengthened intentionality and purposefulness.
- Clarity of choice.
- Increased mental focus and motivation.
- Release from judgmental thoughts, directed at oneself and others.
- Greater capacity to forgive.
- Expanded simplicity of thought and expression.

Increased Awareness

- Expanded self-awareness, self-confidence, and self-esteem.
- Knowing what we really wanted and where we really stood.

- Knowing what was true for ourselves.
- Less self-deception.
- Increased sense of one's own genuine goodness.
- Increased compassion for others.
- Expanded appreciation and gratitude for others and for our circumstances.
- Increased sensitivity toward others.
- Expanded sense of connectedness with others and with the larger forces that shape our lives.
- Greater intimacy and love.
- Expanded sense of the sacred, the spacious, the unknown, the *more* of life.

Increased Capacity

- Expanded ability to be proactive.
- Flexibility of response to daily events.
- Increased creativity.
- Increased trust in the everyday events of life themselves.
- Expansion of ability to let go of what cannot be controlled.
- Courage to take our place in the situations calling for our presence.
- Ability to take risks and face challenges.
- Willingness to contribute what we have.
- Expansion of excitement about *getting on with it*, whatever *it* may be.

- Significant increase in the capacity to use split-attention.
- Significant increase in ability to be awake and aware in the midst of everyday activities.

Emergent Themes and Reflections

There are few important themes that emerged during the inquiry and that are visible in the case study narratives, the description of mindful awareness experience, and the list of benefits. They are briefly discussed below.

Sixty Seconds

About halfway through the inquiry period, when we were discussing the significant benefits we were enjoying from our experiences of mindful awareness, it occurred to us to ask the quantitative question: how *much time* did we think that we were spending each day actually engaged in mindful awareness. We all acknowledged that, although we all had occasional experiences of extended mindfulness, that our common experience was that we would wake up, be mindful for a few seconds, go back to sleep, and wake up again. One of us suggested that a total of *sixty seconds* was about right for the average day, and we all laughed in agreement. We concluded that adding *only a minute* of mindful awareness to our days appeared to be generating significant changes in our experience. From that point on, the term *60 Seconds* symbolized an extraordinary return on investment. A little mindfulness went a long way, and we glimpsed a bit of what might become possible as we learned to *extend* the moments of mindful awareness that we spontaneously experienced.

Impact of our Mindful Awareness on Others

As the inquiry progressed, our shares included many references to the shifting quality of our relationships with others. As we became more mindful in our conversations and encounters with the people at work and at home, we noticed that others became less defensive and more open in response. We concluded that the receptive and attentive space that mindfulness appeared to create within us was having an effect on the people around us. It seemed to us that we were easier to talk to when we were mindfully aware, better listeners, and more critical thinkers. All of this seemed to add value to our presence with others, and the responses we received appeared to verify this conclusion.

Splitting the Atom

It appeared to us that being completely present to a given moment seemed to release a nurturing and nourishing power that wasn't nearly as apparent if one wasn't awake and aware. Mindful awareness seemed to unleash a sense of fullness in the moment: a sense of completeness, spaciousness, and fulfillment that made an ordinary experience *so much more,* it was like the splitting of an atom. This was difficult to language, but this metaphor spoke to the magic that appeared to be contained in every moment: answers to problems were *in the moment*, deep feeling was *in the moment*, richness and bigness and a sense *everything necessary* was *in the moment*, but *only* when *we* were in the moment. Otherwise, it was just another moment.

Engagement with Everyday Life

The three co-researchers acknowledged that they had come to the inquiry with conclusions in place about mindful awareness: that it was only to be found in meditation, and that it was something to be experienced in extraordinary circumstances, not in the course of ordinary daily life. It was clear to all of us that we lived in a culture that shared these conclusions and was largely unappreciative of and blind to the experiences we were having. The co-researchers acknowledged that they had come to the inquiry eager to learn about being awake and aware, but regarding the activities of their daily lives as fundamental *distractions* to mindful awareness, distractions from which they needed to *withdraw* in order to experience being mindful. We realized that periodic withdrawal had its place, but that everyday life was the fundamental laboratory and training ground for mindful awareness.

A Spirit of Inquiry

In the brief discussion we had on our second weekend concerning making this experience of everyday mindfulness available for others, it occurred to us that the *context of inquiry* was very valuable as a pedagogical device. It spoke to the *natural curiosity* that we felt in ourselves and that we assumed existed for other people. Furthermore, it preserved the independence of judgment and the requirement to explore for oneself that, to us, seemed critically important in our own discoveries during the study.

We also recognized the necessity of having had mindful experiences in our past that we could draw on as reference points for what we were seeking. We

didn't have ideas as to how to help people with no experience of mindfulness would generate this curiosity, but it didn't seem beyond the realm of possibility that it would happen. It seemed to us that we could provide assistance to curious and interested groups of people who, just as we had done, could enter, mutually and equally, into an inquiry as co-explorers, practice split-attention, and–in a open and disciplined way–share with each other what they discovered. In this approach we saw pedagogical possibilities.

Difficulties and Discouragements

We identified three primary sources of difficulty and discouragement in our efforts to be awake and aware more fully in our daily lives:

- *Persistent rationalization*–our minds appeared eminently willing and able to do *anything* other than actually experience mindful awareness. They tended to substitute analyzing, discussing, and understanding mindfulness for actually *experiencing* and describing its experience.
- *Impatience, guilt, and perfectionism*–mindful awareness often lasted for only a short period of time. Sleep was so pervasive that it required continual patience, self-forgiveness, and a willingness to give up perfectionism once and for all and be content with waking up when it occurred, practicing split-attention when that happened, and maintaining a gentle, strong intention to keep practicing.
- *Cultural blindness*–we became highly aware of the fact that we live in a culture that appears to be blissfully ignorant of mindful awareness and, at times, apparently dedicated to preserving its absence. It

seemed wise to us to create effective and manageable ways of maintaining our solidarity and mutual support.

When Mindfulness is not a Preferred State

In our first weekend, Ravi raised the question as to whether or not there were times in which mindfulness was *not* especially helpful, e.g., when there was a particular task that needed to be accomplished, a report to be written, or when a certain focus needed to be maintained in a discussion or a meeting. Also, he speculated that being mindful might interfere with the enjoyment he experienced of just letting his thoughts run free as he walked. George and Ursula raised the possibility that mindfulness might not be especially helpful when watching a film or reading a book. We agreed to keep an eye on these possibilities as we proceeded, and then we became so interested in the experience of mindfulness that we didn't bring up the subject again until after the research was completed and the matter was raised by dissertation committee member, Allan Combs. Three months after the completion of the project, I revisited the subject with the co-researchers, and we offered the following opinions.

Ursula declared, "I don't really have any times when I think mindfulness would not be preferable." She shared, however, that there were times when she was singing when, in attempting to be mindful, she would become so aware of what her fingers were doing on the guitar strings that it distracted her from being fully present to the experience.

Ravi wrote the following:

> Worrying about when NOT to be mindful turns out not to be an issue for me. The real issue is remembering to BE mindful. As to

it turning up when I don't want it–that just doesn't happen, at least not to me.

As I remember the original conversation, my point was that I actually sometimes enjoy interludes of talking to myself, letting my thoughts run, reviewing where I am- being deliberately away from the present, and in my thoughts, if you like. On my walk this last Sunday, for instance, I deliberately had these periods, and then deliberately had periods of full mindful awareness. That works for me. Both are very nurturing to me. I greatly value both.

George offered these words:

The only time I could imagine wanting not to be mindful would be at times when I decide to 'suspend disbelief' such as watching a film or reading a novel. If I wanted to be fully involved. I think the reality of being in a cinema or when reading, being fully aware of the book and the process of reading, would inhibit my ability to be lost in imagination.

I have tried this watching TV, I notice that when I am mindful, the size of the screen reduces, and the room is apparent, what is on TV becomes less important, and is easily dismissed.

In response to Allan Comb's inquiry, I wrote the following:

When I've managed to return to mindfulness in the midst of watching a movie, eating a meal, reading, etc., invariably I've found that the experience is richer, with more depth and texture. It's not a matter of choosing not to be mindful, because I prefer it, but rather it's the case that I just go to sleep after a few seconds or minutes of mindfulness and don't wake up again until a bit later!

While I still value the aim of being mindful as often as possible in daily life, I acknowledge the individual differences that exist between people's experience of mindful awareness, and I respect the fact that, for some people, there are times in which the heightened state of self-awareness that is central to mindfulness is not something that they find helpful in those moments.

Creating the Conditions for Mindful Awareness in Daily Life

During these three months, we learned a lot about a variety of factors that influence our capacity to experience mindful awareness during the activities of our daily lives. These learnings are embedded in the material already presented and are summarized here for clarification. Our learnings gathered most naturally around the following seven themes.

Understanding Mind*lessness *as well as Mindfulness

Thus far, the presentation of results has focused on the experience of mindful awareness. We found that it was vital to appreciate and understand the state of being in which we spend most of our waking hours: the state of mind*less*ness, the state of being asleep, on automatic pilot. Mindlessness is so functionally effective, so accepted as the cultural norm, and so reinforced by the experience of nearly everyone around us, that we slide into sleep without even noticing it and remain there for long periods of time.

There were many signs of falling asleep, including: habitual behaviors such as multi-tasking, compulsive and repetitive responses to the events of our daily lives, a sense of separation from ourselves and from those around us, a sustained anxiety about the future, a sense of helplessness about our lives or an exaggerated sense of our power and capacity to control events, and confusing imagination with reality. We noticed that each of us had particular activities in which we found it easy to stay asleep, including: physical exertion, like fast jogging; eating and drinking, especially in front of television; getting extremely busy and then collapsing afterwards; feeling judgmental or disapproving; talking about mindfulness; multi-tasking; when feeling physical pain; watching

television; reading; when facing or trying to solve big problems; when doing routine tasks; when drinking alcohol; when feeling guilty; when feeling anxious; when others are upset. One of the sure and certain signs of mindlessness was the act of blaming someone or something else for how we felt or for what we choose to do; this was *especially* true when we found ourselves blaming our environment or someone in it for our inability to be mindful (e.g., *all these distractions are* preventing *me from being mindful!*)

We noticed that we paid a price for being asleep, e.g., compulsivity, negativity, anxiety, lack of creativity and purposefulness, hopelessness, and lack of motivation. Sometimes this cost was more subtle, in that its effects were culturally approved and even rewarded: e.g., feeling a sense of driven-ness to get things done, perfectionism, inability to say *No* to further demands at work, a fixation on earning money and being successful, and a conviction that unless certain things happened we couldn't be really happy.

Furthermore, we noticed that when we were caught up in mindlessness, we often sought satisfaction in *other* mindless activity like: drinking, watching television, spending more time working, escapist literature, or eating. Interestingly enough, each of us noticed that when we spent more time being mindful, our compulsion to engage in the compensatory activity eased or even disappeared.

We learned that it was helpful to notice the signs of mindlessness and to *support each other* to notice them; once noticed, we could immediately choose to practice split-attention and return to mindfulness, even if only for a few moments.

In this way, we found that *difficult experiences became the occasion for waking up*.

Managing a 2-Phase Process: Waking Up and Extending

We learned that the experience of mindful awareness appears to have two distinct phases: the *initial moment* of awakening, over which we have no direct control, and the *extending* of the experience, in which we can have some participation. This was very helpful to discern.

The initial moment of waking up into mindful awareness, *always* came as a surprise. Suddenly, we would be awake, realizing that (a) we were now awake instead of asleep and (b) we had been asleep since the last time we were awake, *and we could remember that time* when last we were mindful. This experience always *happened to* us; it was never something we chose to experience. We concluded that, fundamentally, it was an experience of *grace: a serendipitous occurrence over which we had no direct control* However, there *did* appear to be a very obvious connection between our practice of split-attention and the amount of times we spontaneously awakened during the activities of everyday life.

Once we had awakened, then we had the opportunity to *extend* the experience by consciously choosing to *add an element of attention* by focusing our awareness not only on what we were doing in the moment–e.g., typing on a keyboard, reading an email, drawing a diagram, listening to someone, reading, riding in a car, walking, taking a shower–but also on one or two other things, e.g., the feel of breath going in and out of the body, the sounds around us, something

within our field of vision. Splitting attention in this way would allow a few more moments or perhaps even minutes of mindfulness.

We consciously adopted this practice for ourselves: when I notice that I've awakened, I will (a) enjoy it, (b) forgive myself if needed for having been asleep again, and (c) extend the moment by continuing to do what I'm doing and splitting my attention. We repeated this throughout the day as we worked, played, and engaged with friends and family. At the end of the three months, the three co-researchers concluded that the waking up phase was happening consistently and in a variety of activities; now they were keen to actively focus on the phase of extending mindful awareness.

Key Elements in the Practice of Split-attention

After a brief introduction to split-attention, the co-researchers became increasingly adept at its practice. We each had our *preferred ways* of dividing our attention, and we all concluded that it was wise to follow a path of least resistance: utilizing the specific practice that came most easily (e.g., seeing, hearing, breathing, etc.). We noticed that, after a while, we needed to *shift* the practice, for our minds seemed quite capable of getting used to whatever we were doing and lull us back to sleep.

It required *patience and self-forgiveness,* to realize that, for the tenth time in a morning, sleep had come again. Eventually, all of us realized that the more we applied split-attention to the moments of high drama in our daily lives–the experiences of painful feelings and negative surprises–the more we *remembered*

to wake up in the middle of similar future experiences. This was significantly helpful.

Managing Reactivity and Automaticity

The four of us shared a background of personal development training in which we had learned a lot about noticing the activity of our minds and its impact upon our emotions. We remarked several times during the course of the inquiry about how helpful this background was in terms of recognizing mindlessness when it occurred and isolating some of the thinking and feeling that was part of being asleep. We concluded that people who had engaged in any sort of self-development work would probably find it helpful as they practiced split-attention, and, likewise, the practice of split-attention in support of everyday mindfulness would be very helpful to anyone's work of self-development.

Maintaining Effective Collegiality

We learned that maintaining *effective* collegiality within our group required wisdom and attention to detail. We needed to be sensitive to avoid making group decisions that coerced one of us into doing something that wasn't helpful. For example, some of us found keeping a daily journal very helpful indeed, while others of us would have slipped into mindless obligation if we had attempted to do it. This required us to experiment with agreements that left room for idiosyncratic differences while nevertheless maintaining our sense of solidarity as a group. We were careful to give each other room to speak, and to speak at length, when necessary. At the same time, we recognized the need for long periods of silence when no one had words to offer. We found it extremely

helpful to watch each other, and notice when someone was experiencing a moment of mindfulness, for we could *build* on that experience, and often we experienced extended moments in which all four of us were mindfully aware at the same time. That appeared to lend a strength that sustained that experience for minutes at a time.

On the second weekend, we learned how easy it was to slip into a discussion *about* mindfulness that appeared to be useful at the time, but which actually left all of us profoundly dissatisfied. The more aware and expert we became at keeping our focus on the *experience* of being awake and aware, the more effective we became in our mutual support of each other's quest to generate more mindful awareness in the midst of daily life.

Embracing What Happens

We concluded that there appeared to be a relationship– and one that exceeded our ability to understand it–between what exactly happened to us moment-to-moment and our capacity to wake up while experiencing it. We couldn't tell if what was happening was what *needed* to happen in order for us to wake up; what we did realize was that we *were* waking up far more often in response to what happened, *including* things that we disliked, didn't especially want, or even feared. In the face of this experience, we concluded that our daily lives could be trusted to bring what would *work* for our awakening. This awareness was something we all could have acknowledged beforehand as a matter of belief; by the end of the inquiry, we *knew* the truth of it more fully.

Improvising Moment-to-Moment

During our second weekend, St. Augustine's classic dictum–*stand in love and do as you please*–became infused with practical meaning for us. We interpreted this to mean: *be awake and make it up as you go.* We found when we were in a state of mindful awareness, we acted with compassion, wisdom, discernment, and courage. We *trusted* ourselves in that state, and there simply were no rules to follow, no commandments to obey, no belief to salute, and no predetermined course of action to take. Situations in life appeared to *provoke* our response, call us forth, invite or even require us to decide where we stood; and the most trustworthy way of knowing what to do was to split our attention, become mindful, and trust our fundamental goodness.

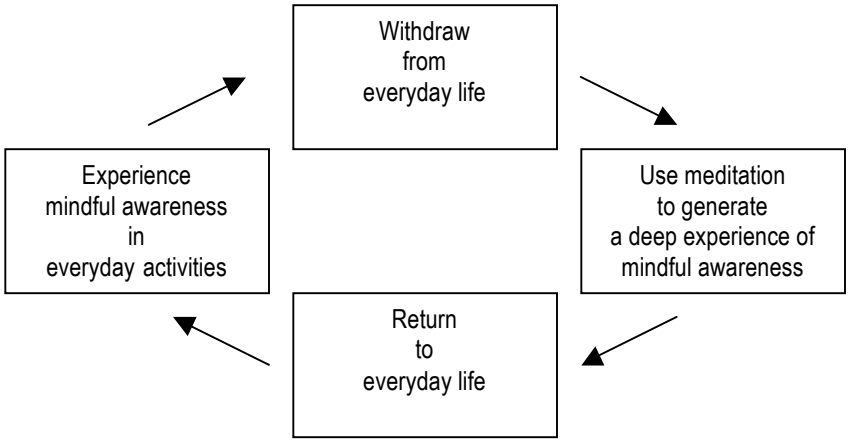
Discussion

The practice of using split-attention to link mindful awareness to our everyday activities appeared to significantly increase our ability to be mindful in the midst of our daily lives. This discussion examines the significance of this result for current mindful awareness training by addressing the following questions: *Why did this work? What are the implications for mindfulness awareness pedagogy? What was not revealed in the study? Where should future research focus its attention?*

A Systems Explanation of the Inquiry's Effectiveness

Conditions that Limit the Effectiveness of Existing Pedagogy

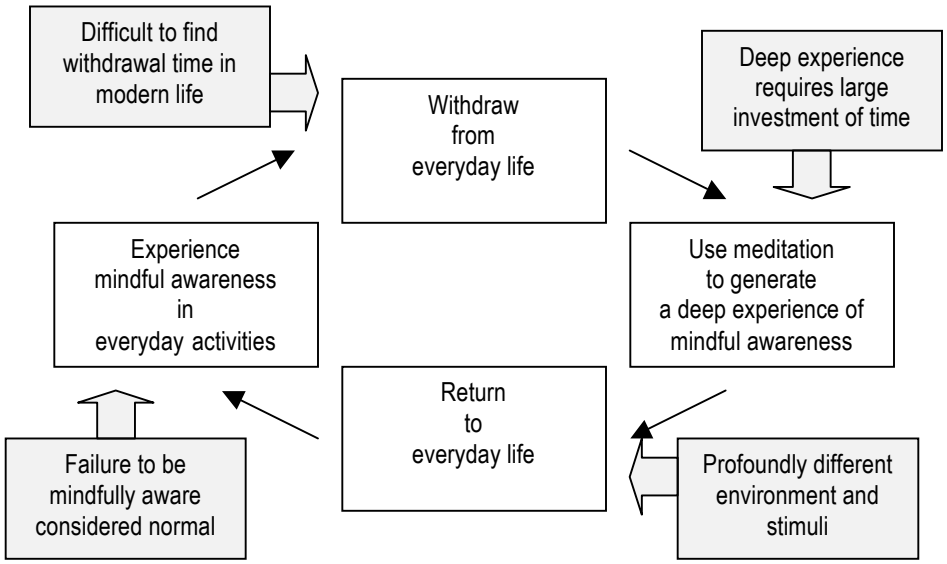
To understand why the practice of split-attention (as utilized in this study) was effective in generating a significant change in our ability to be mindful in the midst of our daily lives, it is helpful to gain the perspective of *systems theory* (Senge, 1990; Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, Roth, & Smith, 1999). The following discussion is grounded in the work of Senge and his collaborators, and it begins with the perspective that existing mindful awareness pedagogy is a *system* of inter-related parts, each of which affects the other.



In this system, people (a) withdraw from their everyday lives–either into a period of formal meditation or into a more prolonged period of retreat–which establishes an environment in which they most easily (b) use meditation to generate an experience of mindful awareness that sticks with them when they (c) return to their everyday activities so that they can (d) experience mindful awareness in the midst of their normal activities and, having the benefits of this experience, be willing to (a) withdraw again for more instruction and experience, etc. These are what Senge and his collaborators called *growing actions*, for each

element of the system feeds the next, and, unless some kind of limitation occurs to block the action between the systemic elements, the system continues to expand people's ability to *experience mindful awareness in the activities of everyday life.*

As systems operate in the real world, they run into *limiting conditions* which generate slowing actions that block a system's ability to function. The review of mindful awareness literature identified four particular limiting conditions affecting existing mindful awareness training. Each element of the system is confronted by one of these conditions:



Meditation-based, retreat-oriented pedagogy has four limiting factors that hinder its effectiveness:

- Our modern, American lifestyle leaves precious little time for daily meditation and makes it virtually impossible for most people to invest

the sort of time–weeks and even months–that serious mindfulness practitioners advocate (Kornfield, 2001a; Schwartz, 1995).

- This inability to invest *substantial* time in meditation practice–at home and on retreat–fails to generate the depth of mindful awareness that can sustain itself upon return to normal life. As a result, mindful awareness is identified with the *experience of meditation* instead of the experience of *daily life.*
- The environment of daily life provides a *profoundly* different environment from the meditative/retreat-oriented environment in which mindful awareness was learned and practiced. Daily life usually presents radically different stimuli that that of a meditative environment (eyes closed, quiet surroundings) or a retreat setting (slow pace, no phones, extensive solitude), and people's capacity for mindful awareness is often unable to survive the transition.
- Level 3 awareness (de Ropp, 1968) is considered *normal* in daily life. When people fail to experience the mindful awareness day-to-day that they experienced in meditation or on retreat, they easily adopt the *consensus consciousness* (Tart, 1986) of the culture. As a consequence, the daily activities of life are regarded as *impediments* to mindful awareness, and mindful awareness is regarded as an *escape* from daily life.

Split-attention Applied to Everyday Activities as an Effective Intervention

When people experience the slowing down of a system, their first response is often to *do more of the growing actions*. After all, this is what made the system work in the first place. When the pedagogical system for mindfulness training isn't producing more mindful awareness in everyday life, people often try to: make more time for more retreats and/or meditation, change their daily activities to more closely resemble a retreat environment, or find *another* teacher or form of meditation that hopefully will work better.

People fail to realize that it is *pressure* of the *growing actions* that give the *slowing actions* their strength, e.g., the *more* skilled people become at being able to be mindfully aware in a quiet environment, the *less* skilled they are at being mindful aware in a noisy environment. For the system to regain its effectiveness, either (a) the limiting conditions have to be removed or (b) *something new* must be added to the system to give the growing actions *leverage* over the slowing actions. To provide leverage, a *systemic intervention* must *embrace* the limiting conditions instead of ignoring them, and *unite* these limiting conditions with the *fundamental energy and strength* of the system.

The practice of using split-attention to *link* the *experiential energy* of mindful awareness with *daily activities* appeared to provide exactly this sort of leverage in our day-to-day lives: (a) it didn't require additional time for withdrawal into meditation, reflection, or retreat; (b) it provided a way to deepen and extend the experience of mindfulness which, previously, had largely been experienced in meditative withdrawal; (c) it used the *chaos and turmoil* of daily life (Tart, 1986) as the *locus* of mindful awareness–where mindful awareness

could be learned and where it could be lived; (d) it provided an ongoing experience of waking up *in the midst* of our daily lives, which generated confidence, curiosity, and courage to keep working at it. Ultimately, I believe that this intervention succeeded for the same reason that the existing pedagogy of mindfulness has succeed for thousands of years in spite of limiting conditions past, present, and future: the *strength and energy* that drives this particular system of mindful awareness pedagogy is linked to the evolutionary force of life itself (Combs, 1996; Feuerstein, 1995; Wilber, 2000a).

If this systemic analysis is accurate, it offers hope that split-attention, used in this way, could augment mindful awareness training in a way that is simple, direct, and effective. Of course, like all systems, any augmented pedagogy will eventually encounter its own limiting conditions, and further interventions will be required.

Elements of an Augmented Pedagogy for Mindful Awareness

It is possible to augment the current pedagogy of mindful awareness training in a way that: (a) uses its inherent energy and strength, (b) embraces the limiting conditions that are impairing its effectiveness, and (c) delivers an immediate and continuing experience of mindful awareness in the midst of everyday activity. The following suggestions are intended for a small group of people who, following the example of this inquiry, meet face-to-face for enough time to get started, and who then continue with long-distance contact and periodic follow-up meetings. In addition, the following pedagogical elements can be

incorporated into existing mindful awareness training in a variety of ways, both by groups and by individuals.

Keeping an Eye on the Goal of Mindful Awareness in Everyday Activities

It is critical to stay focused on the fact that the purpose of mindful awareness training is to be awake and aware *in the midst* of normal, daily activities. Generating mindful awareness in meditation, on retreat, or other special circumstances is helpful and can lead to important choices in life, however the point of those practices is to become more mindfully aware in day-to-day life. This is simple to understand but difficult to remember. When people regard meditative moments as *relief* from the experience of daily living, the chances are good that they have forgotten the goal.

Engaging the ups and downs of living *with* mindful awareness often produces remarkable results: discernment, courage, and action that really changes things. Over time, learning to become mindful *in the moment* generates a capacity to *embrace* and *learn from* everything that life brings.

Honoring Current Practices while Trusting Individual Inclination

The practice of split-attention is intended to *augment* traditional pedagogy, not replace it. The practice allows people to build upon their experiences of meditation, retreat, and worship by providing a simple and effective exercise to undertake when–probably as a result of their traditional practices–they find themselves waking up during their daily lives.

It is possible, however, that this new practice may expose for people the fact that they have pursued other practices purely out of habit, or because they felt

obligated. The effectiveness of split-attention may draw people away from practices that, in their best judgment, aren't serving their needs. This provides an opportunity for people to trust their inclinations, sharpen their purposes, and take a stand for what most serves their interests.

Trusting Curiosity and Inquiry

We realized that, throughout the inquiry, we were motivated fundamentally by a spirit of *inquiry*. We followed our *curiosity* where it led, and it pulled us along: we experimented with different points of focus for our divided attention; we applied the practice to a wide range of daily activities; and *all* of us started waking up *often* in the midst of difficulties and painful emotional experiences–moments in which we had typically been asleep for years.

Trusting people's curiosity, and encouraging *them* to trust their own curiosity, keeps responsibility for learning and for growth where it belongs: in their hands, instead of in the hands of a teacher, a guru, an authority. People learn to value their own way of approaching mindful awareness and to take it at their own pace. This appears to generate a significant sense of self-confidence and sensitivity to the rhythms of one's own learning process.

Utilizing Split-attention in the Moments of Waking Up

It appeared that *each moment* that someone *thought about* using split-attention was *itself* a moment of *self-remembering*, a moment of *waking up.* In those moments, each of us tried to use split-attention *while carrying on* with whatever activity we were doing. Sometimes we *immediately forgot* and went *back to sleep.* Often, especially as we became more skilled, we remembered to

split our attention and experience what happened as a result. The practice was simple, effective, and easily forgotten within a few seconds or minutes; but another moment of *waking up* would arrive later on.

The practice is so simple and, in its own way, so humbling (in that minutes, hours, or days can elapse between waking moments), that it is easy to dismiss as too difficult or too dull. Sticking with it, however, appears to generate important results.

Asking if People are Mindful When it Appears that They are Not

This was a critical element of our group's experience. Given the tendency of human beings, especially in a group, to do *anything* other than be mindfully aware, it was important to honor the opinion of the person who, in a given moment, was the first to notice that we were talking *about* mindfulness instead of being mindful. This may be the single most important measurement of group maturity and strength; once someone *notices and asks* if someone is awake, *everyone* tends to wake up and have the opportunity to practice split-attention to extend the moment.

Alternating Cycles of Experience and Sharing-as-Description

We spent 95% of our three-month inquiry in the setting of our daily lives,at home and at work. We wrote in journals, shared them online, and conducted long-distance conference calls on a weekly basis. At the conclusion of the inquiry, we unanimously voted to continue the phone calls on a bi-weekly basis and to journal as we individually felt the need.

This cycle of experiencing mindful awareness during our daily lives and then talking about our experience with each other appeared to be mutually reinforcing. We found that is was critical, however, to *share* our experiences and not *discuss* them, to *describe* our experiences and not *explain* them, to *tell the stories of our experiences* and not theorize about them.

Some Remaining Questions

There were many questions raised directly and indirectly by the results of this inquiry. The most important ones include the following:

Regarding an Individual's Experience of Split-attention Practice

- Will this practice be effective for people who have not had as much experience as the co-researchers with handling the workings of the human mind?
- Will this practice be effective for people who are unfamiliar with the practice of meditation?
- What is the long-term (12-18 months) impact of this practice on an individual's life, and how effective are individuals in sustaining this practice for that length of time?

Regarding a Group's Experience of Split-attention Practice

- What is the experience of a group of people who work together and use this practice to encounter situations in their work?
- What are the most effective ways for a group of people to mutually support each other over a long period of time (12-18 months).
- What is the experience of a group who are strangers to one another when they begin this practice?
- What is the experience of groups that have significant diversity of culture? Race? Political or religious opinions? Groups in which open conflict is present?

Regarding the Application of Split-attention Practice by Teachers

- What is the most effective training for people familiar with this practice who wish to offer it to others?
- How would master teachers of mindful awareness incorporate this practice into their work? How would they amend or expand this process based on their knowledge and experience?

Suggestions for Further Research

The questions above suggest many opportunities for research. The opportunities that I think are the most critical are:

- To explore the long-term experience of individuals who learn this practice; over the course of several years, does the practice of split-attention sustain itself in their experience? What are the elements of

practice that make it easier or more difficult to sustain? What are the limiting conditions that arise systemically from augmenting existing mindful awareness pedagogy with this practice; what further pedagogical augmentations arise from this discovery?

- To involve master-level teachers of mindful awareness in a collaborative effort to utilize this practice in their existing pedagogies, and explore the results of this effort in the lives of their students.
- To explore the experience of *existing working groups* –in both the for-profit and non-profit sectors of society–who use this practice collectively in the conduct of their affairs and the pursuit of their mission.

Reorienting our Relationship with Reality

Mindful awareness reorients our relationship with the day-to-day reality of our lives. This is probably the ultimate benefit of being awake and aware moment-by-moment in our daily existence, and it why pedagogies for mindful awareness have quietly assumed a place of honor throughout history. As far as we know, being awake and aware in a given moment is a uniquely *human* possibility, and when this possibility happens–in a particular moment of a particular human being–we suddenly see our world with new eyes and a more open heart. We escape less and engage more, and we fear less and love more.

Using split-attention to link mindful awareness to everyday activities expands the pedagogy that, for thousands of years, has enabled human beings to shift their relationship with the *reality* of their lives. It is *this shift* that changes everything.

> There is no God but Reality.
> To seek Him elsewhere
> Is the action of the Fall. (Tart, 1986, p. 21)

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APPENDIX

Definitions

- *Mindful awareness, awake, awake and aware, mindfulness,* a *mindful state,* a *mindful state of awareness, mindfully aware,* and *being mindful.* These terms will be used synonymously. In general, they refer to a feeling of unusual clarity of experience and a sense of presence. Specifically, they refer to any one of the following experiences, or any combination of these experiences: (a) a clear, lucid quality of awareness of the everyday experiences of life; (b) a clear quality of awareness as applied to deeper and more subtle processes of the mind; (c) an awareness of being aware, in which some part of the mind "witnesses" or remains aware of the ongoing experience of life; and (d) a continuous and precise awareness of the process of being aware (Tart, 1990). Mindfulness, in all its forms, has a quality to it that is similar to the experience of awakening from sleep: a quality of lucidity, alertness, brightness, and dimensionality.
- *Split-attention.* In this practice, people deliberately split off a small part of their awareness which they then use to monitor the experience they are having (Burton, 1995; Ouspensky, 1977; Tart, 1994). It supports self-observation, and, when applied in the moment to everyday activities, it opens the possibility of mindful awareness.