

October Mindful Meditation Challenge Recap

My work has a challenge for its employees called the Mindfulness Meditation Challenge, hosted through the One Percent Happier App. This encourages us to have daily moments of mindfulness. The structure of the mindfulness challenge is that every day there is a portion for learning or reflecting (essentially a little talk from a “mindfulness expert” discussing different ways to be mindful) and then there is a guided meditation portion.

DO YOUR DISHES

The first day of the challenge really seemed to touch me and I wanted to capture some of the things that peaked my interest.

In the learning portion, the meditation expert was talking about doing the dishes and I feel that I really connected with what he was saying.

Lately, I have really been struggling with doing household tasks in my apartment. I specifically had been talking to my behavioral psychologist about the struggles I had with things such as cleaning/organizing or doing the dishes. I have REALLY been struggling with doing my dishes recently.

What’s frustrating is I am trying to celebrate my other little wins. For example, I have been cooking more often (in attempt to practice the life skill, eat healthier, and save a little bit of money), but in doing this I create a greater mess in my already small kitchen. This “little win” of cooking more leads to more dishes needing to be cleaned, which will mostly likely be avoided because the task feels so big for me for some reason.

Here are some contributing factors of why this might be:

- I will be the first to admit, I am not the cleanest and neatest person to begin with. I have always been a little chaotic and messy with my living spaces ever since I was young.
- When I am doing the dishes, I hand wash them (I don’t know why I can’t just put them in the the dish washer, but for some reason I just feel that if I clean them myself, it will be better than the dish washer.... maybe it’s me trusting my abilities more than the machine, I’m not really sure).
- Not only do I hand wash all my dishes by the way, but I also hand dry them (again, I can just lay them out to air dry, but for some reason it is all or nothing with me and if I have clean dishes, I need to be able to put them back right away).
- Most of the time, cleaning or doing the dishes doesn’t feel like a priority for me. In my head, I feel like I can be (and would rather be) putting my energy elsewhere. I fully acknowledge that doing the dishes or cleaning is important and a skill that I should practice/possess, but for some reason, I can’t seem to desire to prioritize it even if it could potentially improve my quality of living by a lot.
- I don’t feel like I have the time, but I know that it is because I don’t prioritize it. A clean kitchen, does not feel like motivation enough.
- Living by myself makes it harder for a couple reasons. First, I don’t have someone (or a group of people) I can split the household chores with, so everything is my responsibility and it feels like so much more to do when it is alone. Second, because I do not have anyone living in my space, I sometimes feel a lack of accountability in doing all the expected household task. The only person who’s life is affecting is mine, so I don’t feel obligated to clean up as much. If I were living with someone else, I most likely feel a lot differently because I am sharing a space. Maybe I need to have a little more self respect.

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- Since being diagnosed and getting sick, I feel as if this has been really challenging the way that I live. My life has changed so much- in too many ways to count. In the past year, I have experienced high levels of fatigue or pain. In addition to that, I have been attending multiple appointments a week to manage my health while still working full-time and trying to entertain my hobbies among other things that occupy my time. In the instances that I am not experiencing these symptoms of pain or fatigue, the absolute last thing that I want to do is the dishes. Often times, I don't have the energy. But when I do have the energy, I don't want to expend this precious commodity on the dishes.
- These past couple months, I have also been trying to make up for lost time since being sick so I have been traveling more and investing in more experiences outside my apartment. It is hard to prioritize doing the dishes or cleaning when I feel like I am always going in and out of my home,
- Ok, there are so many more excuses and reasons that I can give as to why the dishes do not get done in my apartment so let's just skip ahead to what I learned from this mindfulness expert about doing the dishes.

One of the things that really struck a cord with me was him talking about “energetically investing” in the thing that we are doing. I really love the phrasing of this. I love the idea that I am investing my energy in the task at hand [i.e. the dishes], especially because deep down I know that this is an investment in me, in my space, and in my quality of living. Sometimes I forget that I pay to live in my space- I pay (what feels like) a significant amount of money for my apartment. Why not view household tasks as an investment? It doesn't seem like to far of a jump when I look at it that way.

[I don't want to go on this tangent right now and I will definitely save this thought for another day, but I just wanted mention here that a lot of my family members are really good at creating a home through household tasks and chores. A lot of it is a labor of love and seeing the beauty in ordinary tasks. I am still learning how to do this.]

Another idea that was mentioned that captured my attention was the idea of turning this (i.e. the act of doing the dishes) into “meaningful practice.” The beauty of being human is that we have the ability to give things meaning and we have the ability to find meaning in the things that we experience and interact with [let's not dive to deep into where things get there meaning because we might find ourselves in a *GEB* sized rabbit hole trying to understand if anything in this world actually has an meaning to it].

Anyways, the meditation expert encourages us to use this act of cleaning the dishes to “reframe this as an opportunity to practice in some way.” I love this because I will be the first to say that the initial challenge for me when it comes to actually getting the dishes done (CONSISTENTLY, that's the key word for me right now because I often lack consistency when it comes to doing chores) is my perspective.

The next thing that he says really resonates with me: “practice where you're just appreciating sensory fullness of this moment.”

If anyone knows me well, they know that I am often times constantly stimming. People who know me well would also know that I experience sensory issues as a product of my ADHD. So for me, this phrase made me really think. One of things I've been wanting to work on as an adult is figuring out how to (I want to say “manage” but this doesn't feel like the right word so instead I'll say) *fully exist in my sensory experiences* (I am not quite sure if that phrasing makes sense, but it's the best way that I can describe it right now). So now, being able to appreciate the sensory aspect of this activity (doing the dishes) gives me a new thing to focus on. In a way

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the dishes can become an extension of myself (as corny as this sounds) and cleaning them can be a way of checking in with myself. I want to be *engaging* myself in this activity, allow myself to completely surrender myself to the act of doing the dishes (but in a good and meaningful way). If doing the dishes is my guide to mindfulness, I am but a pilgrim in the search for the ever elusive present moment. HAHAHA that was so corny but I had to say it, I'm so sorry reader!

But in all seriousness, I really like the idea of using this time doing the dishes to check in with myself. Most likely I will be tired and I will not want to do them and it might even be overwhelming. The beauty of it all is that I can (hopefully) scrub away all that tension built up from the day until what is left is peace and clean home.

He finished the learning portion by essentially equating washing your dishes to cleaning your soul. For some reason, I really liked that.

So future me, here's a reminder: wash your dishes, clean your soul.

The meditation portion of the first day was also really impactful for me because it reframed the way that I would allow myself to meditate. Don't get me wrong, I've definitely had my fill of incredibly successful meditation sessions, but I think the way meditation often felt to me was that I needed to control my wandering mind. This can be a huge challenge for me as someone who has ADHD (not to use that as an excuse for things but if you know me, you get what I'm saying haha).

As a little side note, I just wanted to also say: I never loved the naming of ADHD, specifically in the sense of it being called "*attention deficit*" because to be quite honest with you

LEARNING ABOUT INTENTIONALITY

I asked the behavioral psychologist that I see to help clarify what it meant to be "intentional." I find that it can be so easy to get so caught up in the buzzwords that we hear in our day to day life that we forget to check in if we are properly digesting their meaning.

As I found myself reading *GEB*, I realized I might not fully comprehend if there was a relationship between "mindfulness & intentionality" and "intelligence." Then I started to panic and wonder if I ever really knew what "intentionality" was or if I only accepted it to be a good thing without fully knowing the practice of being intentional. I find it so funny because I had mentioned to so many people how I desired to be more intentional with *this thing* or *that thing*, but then in that moment of panic, I had started to question if I was even being intentional about being intentional (it's the recursiveness of intentionality I guess... ok the word "intentional" is starting to sound funny to me at this point so let's continue with what I was saying instead of getting caught in this infinite loop of intentionality).

According to my behavioral psychologist, a good way to think about intentionality is knowing the *why* and *how* of the thing that we are doing. At its core, intentionality is about *understanding*. From what I gather, intentionality prioritizes reflecting on the things that you are doing and having a full comprehension of that action (comprehending how you are performing

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it, why you are performing it, and allowing your existence -and being- to be completely engaged in that present action). Intentionality is committing that present version of yourself to what you are doing. There is a that instantaneous moment where self and action become the same thing. In a way, we are just the sum of our choices (idk if this is the best way to think of life, but it's one way to look at things). Intentionality is our commitment to each choice that we make.

For all you calculus lovers, it kinda feels like intentionality is the derivative of choice in the span of a lifetime. I would personally write it as such:

$$intentionality = \int_{birth}^{death} commitment \times action d(action)$$

which is kinda assuming that this is a linear function.... Maybe I would tweak it to be somethings like this instead:

$$intentionality = \int_{birth}^{death} commitment \text{ towards an action } d(action)$$

I'm not really sure. But assume it would be something like that. Like your level of intentionality would be an instantaneous moment at any given time in the continuous function that is your life... ya feel me? I could be totally wrong with this one.... But hey, at least I am trying my best to understand. Being intentional about being intentional... so recursive, so meta of me. LOL.

In my frenzy of trying to understand if I could even picture intentionality in a mathematical way, I decided to use my good friend Google to figure out. I searched "*intentionality as a derivative*" (because that is a perfectly normal thing to search on the inter webs, right?) and the first thing to pop was Google telling me