

## BOOK REVIEWS

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### **Full Catastrophe Living; Using the Wisdom of your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain and illness**

**Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1996**

**Publisher: Piatkus, London**

**ISBN: 0-749-915-854**

**Price: £16.99**

This enlightening book offers the reader access to a new way of living that is rooted in mindfulness. Grounded in scientific research, Jon Kabat-Zinn explores the connections between mind and body. He shows us how we can use our awareness of these connections to face the ups, downs and plateaus of life that he calls the 'full catastrophe'. In this way we can come to participate more fully in our lives by embracing our experiences with a full awareness. He clearly demonstrates how mindful awareness can help us to live a more integrated, fuller and healthier life.

Jon emphasises throughout that each of us is the world expert on our own life, mind and body. All we need to do is to simply take the regular time to observe, without judging, our habitual ways of being. Mindfulness is a way of tapping into a 'wellspring of positive energy for self understanding and healing'. The message of the book is therefore very empowering.

Jon has achieved a remarkable feat in making the ancient art of mindfulness directly available to thousands of patients within a conventional, mainstream, American hospital. He established a 'Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction' programme within the University of Massachusetts Medical Centre and his book gives the reader full access to

this training programme. The patients come with a wide range of often serious and sometimes life-threatening medical problems. There are heart-breaking and heart-warming descriptions in these pages, of their stories and of the transformations they undergo by bringing mindful awareness to their experiences.

The reader is also invited to 'embark upon a journey of self development, self discovery, learning and healing' by following the detailed and explicit directions on how to practice and how to integrate the learning into one's life. There is a section on the research findings in this area of behavioural medicine that provides clear information on how mindfulness is related to mental and physical health. A section entitled 'Stress', again clearly explains how bringing moment-to-moment awareness to stressful situations can open up the possibility of coping more effectively with them. The book gives information and guidance on bringing mindfulness to a wide range of life areas that cause stress including, medical symptoms, physical and emotional pain, anxiety and panic, work, time, food, relationships and events in the outside world. Finally, Jon gives suggestions for integrating this into one's life so that it becomes a way of being.

I read this book about seven years ago and found it compelling and transforming. I continue to practise the approach I learned in the book and it planted many seeds for me that I am continuing to harvest now.

**Becca Crane., Mindfulness Instructor, North Wales**