

POSTMODERN



Engaged and Authentic Practice

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AWARENESS

That of which we are unaware is unlikely to change in a direction that benefits us. Put more plainly, you can't change what you don't notice. One way to improve executive functioning is to practice awareness. Awareness is objective observation, noticing without judging. When we are the observer, practicing awareness, we step outside our thoughts and actions. We gain perspective and open the way for our own, innate wisdom.

Awareness is a skill which can be developed and trained. Just like muscular strength and physical prowess, the more often we practice, the greater and more natural our awareness. Most of us spend the majority of our day (and our lives) in a state of relative unawareness. With practice, we can train ourselves to gradually become more aware, until it becomes the natural, background state of our daily living.

Awareness is the foundation upon which purposeful, conscious leadership evolution is based. Increased awareness produces greater freedom of choice in our responses to what happens around us. Like physical fitness, awareness is unlikely to become one of our defining characteristics without effort on our part. Even for those who are naturally self-aware, daily practice hones and increases this critical skill. The daily practice of journaling is a good place to start.

WHY JOURNAL?

Journaling is an important tool for enhancing self-awareness. Journaling provides a vehicle through which our inner voice can speak, revealing that which may not be clear to our conscious mind. Putting things on paper helps us to see our thoughts and emotions more clearly and can reveal hidden patterns. This self-understanding effectively moves us from being inside of (and therefore subject to) our thoughts and emotions to viewing them more objectively. This shift from "subject" to "object" allows us to see more options and perspectives and puts us in a position to make purposeful decisions about our feelings and actions.

Journaling and contemplative practices, such as prayer or meditation, are mutually supportive. Five to 15 minutes of contemplative time before or after journaling can magnify the benefits of journaling. Recording what arises during the contemplative practice can solidify and deepen the experience. Contemplative time can allow patterns and realizations to arise from what was journaled.

There is a strong correlation between mindfulness practice and happiness. Just the act of journaling can improve mood and increase resilience, because it naturally draws you into a state of mindfulness.

HOW TO USE THE JOURNAL

"Laser Journaling" is the method of writing anything from one word to a short sentence, phrase or paragraph, guided by a prompt. The practice of taking a few moments each day focusing on the four cornerstones of mindful awareness (gratitude, review, awareness and intention) creates a life-changing thread of consciousness. You may use a page for each day, or use one page over multiple days. It is recommended to at least sit and consider each of the four areas each day and write something, even if only a single word in each circle.

Write in the circles in any order, as much or as little as desired. Put down whatever you comes to your mind; pictures, single words, paragraphs, poetry. Should you desire more space, use blank pages for more in-depth journaling.

It is good to occasionally review and synthesize periodically, such as weekly or monthly. There is a review page placed after every 10 regular pages. When you get to that page, go back and look over your daily pages. Are there any patterns you notice? Recurring themes? Can you see progress or changes in your awareness or your actions?

Working the Words Within the Circles

Words are merely signposts pointing toward truth; just as a finger pointing towards the moon is not the moon herself. Let the words in this journal be the seeds from which your own unique wisdom and truth sprout. Here are the author's interpretations of the words that seed each daily reflection section. You may find different, more personally meaningful definitions, or choose to substitute your own words for these.

Gratitude

Gratitude is the foundation for a happy life. Being grateful for 'what is' allows us to see the good that is right here, right now. Actively practicing gratitude develops in us the habit of appreciating what is, rather than regretting what isn't.

Gratitude opens us to even greater abundance. A daily practice of gratitude rewires our brains to default less often to negative assumptions and projections and leaves us more open to positive options and outcomes.

Through fully accepting and embracing reality, we most powerfully and effectively move forward. With a change in perspective, difficulties become blessings through the growth that they bring. Don't force gratitude for difficulties if you're not there yet. Instead, find something else in your life for which to be positive and thankful.

A good place to start practicing gratitude is to start or end each day by listing at least 3 things for which you are grateful. Go with whatever comes to mind first, whether it is "increasing enlightenment" or "Cheerios".

Awareness

Awareness is simply bringing things into consciousness. What realizations have come to you since your last journaling time? What have you noticed? Take a moment to listen to your inner voice, or the voice of something beyond your worldly, mind-based experience. What message, lesson or vision comes out of the quiet listening? Use this space to record things that come into your awareness, on your journey of becoming a more authentic leader. Allow into your awareness, patterns of thought and behavior that previously have been unconscious. Be open to new insights and perspectives, or messages coming from your growing inner wisdom.

Noticing alignment is another aspect of practicing awareness that teaches us to see everything that happens as a part of our journey. No step is wasted. You might record something you noticed that serendipitously showed up in your life to support your growth. Try to evaluate all life events, whether an apparent blessing or challenge, in this context. In this way, we become better at seeing and utilizing the infinite positive energy that lies beneath all of life.



Working the Words Within the Circles

Review

Review the time since your last journaling session. As objectively as possible, evaluate how you showed up in life, relative to your envisioned "best self". Review and note your positive choices and changes. With self-compassion, note any places where you were not centered, or know you were not acting from your best self. It is just as important to notice our progress as our stumbling blocks.

Evaluate not only your actions, but also your motivations, reactions, thoughts and feelings. Use your growing practice of awareness to note times when you felt off-center, unengaged, triggered emotionally. Notice also what you made you feel good; about life, about yourself or about choices you made.

The practice of review is not an invitation to shame or beating yourself up. Acknowledge, then release any feelings of shame or guilt. Take note of anything that triggered you. Take a cleansing breath, then envision a more positive or centered response.

If possible and appropriate, decide on a way to make a direct amends for any hurt or damage that was caused. If not, reflect on what change of perspective, intention and/or behavioral change you can make differently from now on, and commit to growing toward becoming that person.

Intention/Prayer

Use this space to record your desire or vision; for the day, for your life, or for this moment. You may want to set an intention in the form of "may I...(have wisdom, face this challenge, etc.)". This is also a good place to record compassionate wishes for others in your life.

Write your prayer or intention for the day. Then, to the best of your ability, sit for a moment in a place of trust and faith in the ultimate goodness of whatever may come.

The most powerful prayers come from a place of knowing that what we need is already available to us. Sometimes, the catalyst for change is simply bringing our desires into awareness, then acknowledging we already have whatever is needed to put that change into motion.



Gratitude
EXAMPLE PAGE

I appreciate the small things; the flower in the front yard, my son buttering my toast for me.

Review

I was really present for my spouse during our talk last night.

I failed to consider my employee's perspective and motivation before I spoke to her. Turns out, there was more than I realized going on. I will speak with her today, and be aware of questioning my assumptions more often.

Awareness

Making my mountains smaller always makes them easier to climb.

Intention/Prayer

May I choose to be positive; negativity is a heavy burden to carry.

Date(s):



Gratitude

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Review

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Awareness

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Intention/Prayer

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Review and Synthesis

Look back over your journal entries from the last 2-4 weeks. Do you notice any patterns or recurring themes? Can you note progress? Areas that might need more focus? What messages or lessons present themselves as you look at your experiences over the past weeks or month?



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