

# MIND & HEART @WORK

## Balance your life in 7 steps

David Dewulf

### Introduction

Mindfulness remains at the forefront. Its applications and scientific studies remain on the increase.

Its origin is found 2500 years ago. A man, Gautamo, asked himself how he could be happy in a world which involves setbacks. He developed insight meditation, a concrete method where you discover that it isn't so much the circumstances but the reaction on them that makes you unhappy. Your attitude is therefore essential. And attitude can be trained, therefore mindfulness can also be called attitude training.

Since then Mindfulness spread in the West and its interest is rising. The success of mindfulness is not a coincidence. The method corresponds well with the Western thinking. You learn to look to yourself and the world in a sober manner. This way you develop self-knowledge and you can give direction to your life.

The real value of mindfulness lies in the way upon which you live your life. It is a live long engagement, to be who you are now and to become who you want to be. The present is the starting point, simply because the present is the only moment you have. You accept the present like it is, because this is the reality like it is. Through this free attitude you will notice that this moment is always new, fresh, mysterious and worthwhile to be lived, including the difficult moments. They can become the building blocks of your noble path.

1

---

### A balanced life

*Happiness doesn't mean there are no struggles in your life.*

*Happiness means you give attention and time to what is important for you.*

With mindfulness you highlight your involvement of the only moment you have, the current moment. And this moment is also the only moment where upon you can be happy.

Of course you can make plans and have goals, but if your sight is always set on soon and there, on 'later', you will miss the presents on your 'present' journey. And the present is the only place where you can savour with your heart the colours of your life.

If you want to love in the present, you are honest to yourself and to what you find important. And you give all those aspects of your life equal attention and time. This way you live in balance. You give attention to your job, your time off, family, hobbies, sport, friends and fun events.

Will you manage? It can be difficult. If the responsibilities of life start to increase and tension and time constraints start to build up, the so-called non-essential stuff will get dropped fast. There's no more time for family and friends. And what remains? Work. That what is 'necessary'.

It often comes down to this: a life filled with only heavy responsibilities. And the things that we so much enjoy and that make life worth living have no more room. This is a movement that comes from an attempt to care for ourselves, but it deprives us from the most important thing, the joy to be alive. And it is exactly from this joy we find the power to creatively and in an engaging way tackle our job. That is why the balance is so important.

You will discover in 7 steps what this balance means to you and how you can direct its course. You can give yourself the chance to live to the fullest and to make of your life your lifework.

### **Overview of the 7 insights – steps**

#### *Insight 1: I give myself quite some stress*

We all want to experience happiness but it doesn't seem all that easy. Begin to look in an honest way at the stress you perceive. Do you notice?

- I often get agitated in front of red traffic lights
- I get annoyed on the road when people are not driving the way I want
- I often get impatient if things don't move fast, eg. at the cashier
- People do not meet my expectations
- It winds me up when a colleague is not doing a good job
- I keep ruminating on the struggles in my life
- I complain in silence about my boss
- I always want something else
- I can't stand criticism
- ...

And so on. There are many things to get upset about. Life is not always plain sailing. On top of this people often make it extra hard for us!

Or do we not have to wind ourselves up? Is it the others who make us unhappy? Can we not take our own responsibility for the quality of life?

It all starts with the readiness and honesty to discover how we give ourselves so much stress. We can however choose. We can be our best friend or biggest enemy. What choice do you want to make?

*Insight 2: How is this happening?*

We all do it! We get agitated in front of a red stoplight despite the fact it won't turn green faster. We keep on getting annoyed with a difficult colleague despite the fact he won't become easier.

Does this make sense? Of course not!

You don't have to judge these reactions. They form part of our human existence. And thankfully so. These primitive stress reactions are targeted to self-preservation and survival, and have enabled us to keep on existing as a human being. Without we wouldn't have persisted. We wouldn't have fled the lion, we wouldn't have fought for our lives or we wouldn't avoid great danger.

In modern times where the fear of life isn't on the foreground anymore, the focus of our safety scanner with the built-in stress reaction moves to surviving in the "me-concept". This involves "me" with my values, goals and opinions. And "me" with my preconceived ideas. These are ideas where I think that "me", others or the world has to abide to.

Life, so diverse and constantly changing, will of course always rebel against this aspect, day after day. No, the traffic lights won't be green when you arrive. People won't move out of your way in heavy traffic. They won't let you go in front at the cashier. You also will never achieve perfection even if you'd want! And people will not spare you their criticisms – despite how hard you try.

How do you handle this? Are you prepared to look closer and take responsibility for your happiness and your life? This is your chance to not always drown in the sometimes choppy waves of life and to use your stress reaction as an answer on that.

*Insight 3: It can be different.*

The stress reaction cannot be avoided. It happens often unconscious and as an automatism. Still I don't have to follow it! This is a freeing insight. You don't have to react by shutting down, by getting agitated or by denying.

It is not easy because our stress reaction is closely woven into our constitution. But it is possible thanks to conscious attention and clear intention. And mindfulness is about attention and intention.

It is clear: if the stress reaction takes over, we cannot think clear any more. Our voice turns harsh and we are not any longer open to the best solution, to the bigger picture.

We start to notice what is happening. This is the first step in mindfulness. We covered this already in step 1 and 2. We stop and look at what is there, without judging what we see, otherwise we are prisoner of a new stress reaction. We turn quiet and show understanding for how it is now. It is through involved quietness new ideas emerge. The quietness brings us in contact with neutrality, where there is room for the positive without getting too attached, and where there is room for the negative, without getting lost in disgust. This is the starting point to think and act with wisdom and compassion, and to engage in a noble relationship with life.

*Insight 4: I can think in a new way*

In the involved quietness we can hear the wise voice of compassion. This voice often offers a different perspective of the stress voice. The wise voice of compassion is directed to the bigger whole and to the simple truth that in fact you want to be happy now. This voice knows this is not possible when you fight with the now. It is also not possible when you or others continuously burden yourself with criticism. It is a mild warm voice and at the same time very radical, without disguise.

It is a voice that is honest and that is speaking her truth without attachment to her point of view and without aversion to the opposite point of view. It is the voice of possibilities rather than limitations. She directs herself to what can be and to the difference you can make, day after day, however so small, and she will let you walk your noble path.

*Insight 5: I can express myself in a 'new' way*

Even when we often hear our noble voice and we know this is the direction we want, we still get seduced by the voice of stress. Attachment and disgust, fighting, fleeing and denying keep on defining the rules of the game.

To follow the wise voice of compassion is a process of trial and error, and just as you learn to ski, there is a lot of error in the beginning. It is necessary to be patient, to persevere, and especially to keep an eye on your deepest intentions. They are the seed, sun and water for a beautiful flower. Even if your life resembles a battlefield, you can grow something beautiful and build towards something new. Your thoughts, words and acts are the sources in this process and they find their food in your neutral space.

*Insight 6: I can broaden my circle*

It is not just about myself, it is also about others. Sure, in relationship to myself. Through my relationship with others I get to know myself and learn and grow. We have so much to thank to each other. Already since our birth, we arrive in a 'finished' world. Or at least a world wherein everything is available to us to experience live and survive. A world wherein generations before us have built a certain comfort and quality. From the start you receive possibilities on which you can built further. Perhaps you become part of a company in which a lot has been done to be able to offer you a job. Or you start your own company and you make use of the technology that is now available to us. We cannot exist alone. Can you appreciate this connected web in which we live? Can we take care for the world in which we and our children live? Which choices do you make day by day? And how will the world look like if everybody would make the same choice? It does not always have to be big things. It can simply be your attitude that you bring into every moment of your connected life.

*Insight 7: I can live my life fully out*

We all have a gift for this world, for this life, for the people we love and perhaps also for the people we don't like. Sometimes we don't dare to go for it, because we don't know what we can, we don't believe in ourselves. Or we are afraid to be rejected.

So you stay in your couch and the force of habit takes over. You are not really happy about it, but it truly is comfortable. Doubt, the desire to stand up, but also the fear to truly do it, will pay you several visits until the day you decide to gather all your courage, to wake up and to begin your life path.

It starts with an inner journey, an exploration of who you are, what you want, which road you'll take, what blocks you and what you can do to choose again and again for what you truly want. It is a road of falling and rising.

There will be obstacles and sometimes you'll discover that you have been taken the wrong road and that you haven't pursued what you really wanted. Sometimes you'll notice that the people with whom you have been sharing a path, not stand for the same values as you. Perhaps your trust has been abused and you lost your direction. You just don't know it anymore.

There are moments in which you have to become quiet. You switch back from the doing modus to the being modus, from the bustle to tranquility, from noise to silence. You make contact again with your noble space, where you can choose for what is really important. You gather again your courage and resume your path and discover that everything you need, is already laying on your path. You just have to stand up and begin or resume your path..

I wish you a lot of courage, wisdom and compassion on your noble path and a deeper integration of the messages of this book, so that your life can become a continuous adventure in all its aspects, a life that can be lived with sincerity and respect.

**More information?**

- Mind &heart@work training:  
Visit our website [www.mindfulness.be](http://www.mindfulness.be) (EN) or [www.mindfulbizz.be](http://www.mindfulbizz.be) (NL)

Book ( NL)

Heartful leven. Mindful werken. David Dewulf ( Lannoo, 2015)