

Leisure Experience and Engaged Buddhism: Mindfulness as a Path to Freedom and Justice in Leisure Studies

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I wake to my alarm clock. The face glows 6 am. I stumble to the meditation cushion. My mind cycles through a list of things to do, and I notice these thoughts. I notice the sensations of these thoughts—a quickening of mind, a feeling of pushing in the shoulders and upper torso. Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in and send breath to the places I notice quickening. Breathe out. As I follow the breath in, I notice tightness in my jaw. Breathing out, I feel jaw release. Breathe in. Breathing out, posture shifts as the rigidity in my abdomen releases. I notice my body slouching forward. I straighten my spine, lengthening as if a string attached to the top of my head draws me upward. Breathing in, a glint of anger surfaces in my lower back. I replay a scene moment by moment in my head feeling anger rise, my pulse quickens. I am caught up in the storyline. I gently remind myself to return to awareness of breath. Breathe in. Breathe out. I shift awareness to the quality of thoughts. I notice the fast speed of my thoughts. I notice I am holding my breath. I breathe in deeply to that space of anger in my abdomen. Breathing out, I feel tightness in my abdomen release.

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This captures the first two minutes of my meditation practice this morning, a moment-by-moment awareness of my internal world. Mindfulness is about paying attention to things we normally do not, things we miss in the frantic pace of daily living, or as we are lulled to sleep by distractions and technology. In mindfulness practices, we move attention from the content of consciousness (thoughts, feelings, and sensations) to noticing how these arise and vanish (impermanence) while anchoring attention in the body to in-breaths and out-breaths and bodily sensations that rise with thoughts and emotions. I begin this chapter on leisure and Buddhism with this practice because it is through mindfulness practice that we come to know the dharma and the possibility to open to the interconnectedness in all things including the dharma and leisure; it is not through our thoughts, following a storyline, or figuring things out (i.e., the solutions to yesterdays' problems, or tomorrows' uncertainties). Mindfulness asks us to let go of striving and the pursuit of goals for this is connected to grasping or wanting a certain outcome. It asks us to release competition with ourselves and with others so that a deeper wisdom and being may surface. There is nowhere we are trying to get to—no destination, no achievement, and no goal. Buddhism is a “path to free our minds of limitation and open our hearts” (Aronson 2012, p. xvi). Only from within this practice can we know a different kind of leisure, a different experience of freedom, arrive on a different path to justice.

As we engage in routines of daily life, spirit often becomes buried in sediment created by habitual and automatic routines of daily life. When we grasp at things to soothe and make us feel better (e.g., alcohol, shopping, the latest gear of our leisure pursuit) or to avoid discomfort (e.g., excluding people who are different from us during our leisure pursuits), we perpetuate suffering. As we engage in the habitual and automatic in leisure, freedoms of spirit assumed to be a part of this experience move further and further to a distant horizon. Hedonic approaches to leisure, the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain, which characterizes much of leisure experience in the long run, may diminish our freedoms. Garland, Farb, Goldin, and Fredrickson (2015) explore the connection between mindfulness and eudaimonia stating that mindfulness practitioners report significantly higher levels of eudaimonic

well-being “characterized by a sense of purpose and meaningful, positive engagement with life that arises when one’s life activities are congruent with deeply held values even under conditions of adversity” (p. 294). The focus of this chapter is to explore mindfulness as a path for leisure practices. I introduce the idea of *insight leisure* as an approach to leisure that brings the possibility for deepened connection with eudaimonia and, in so doing, a different experience of freedom.

The challenge of writing about leisure and Buddhism for academic audiences is our propensity to focus on the thoughts of Buddhism as we would any academic concept or idea. Instead, I emphasize in this chapter an engaged Buddhism or experiencing the dharma that requires us to shift our emphasis to *practice as the foundation for knowing*. “Broadly speaking, ‘dharma’ refers to the teachings of the Buddha and to those aspects of reality and experience with which his teachings are concerned” (Batchelor 1997, p. xi). For leisure studies, it is the *practice* of the teachings of the Buddha (dharma), or *dharma practice*, in daily life that shows the most promise. As Batchelor (1997) notes, “The Dharma is not something to believe in but something to do” (p. 17). It is concerned with existential experience and our ability to live life with natural integrity, dignity, and authority on the path to awakening. Batchelor describes that in awakening, the Buddha “awoke to a set of interrelated truths in the immediacy of experience here and now” (p. 6). As such, mindfulness is deeply connected to freedom, not as a philosophical principle or ideology, but rather as liberation from the perpetuation of suffering through engaged dharma practice of moment-by-moment awareness. It is in this embodied knowing rather than pure cognition that we can know a different sort of freedom. As Aronson (2012) describes, through mindful experience and emotional understanding of the processes of mind (rather than content):

we can have some control over the pervasive cultural influences that limit our lives. . . . Once we acknowledge our differences, it becomes possible for us to consider if there is something we wish to alter in our orientation. The more differences we discern, the more opportunities we have to reflect on who we are and what we may wish to become.

(p. xvi)

Mindfulness is essential to social justice. Mindfulness recognizes that our collective freedom is bound in our interconnectedness and differences and an intentional shift away from the perpetuation of violence and suffering through ongoing awareness of the full catastrophe (Kabat-Zinn 2005) of our present moment experience. As Kabat-Zinn (2005) describes, the “whole catastrophe” includes pleasure, pain, and all other aspects of experience as it unfolds in each moment. As he states, “The full catastrophe lies within the complex web of their past and present experiences and relationships, their hopes and their fears, and their views of what is happening to them” (Kabat-Zinn 2005, p. 6). In deep connection, spirit awakens. Rather than pursuit of an absolute truth, dharma practice engages a complex inter-related set of truths in the immediacy of here and now experience (Batchelor 1997). Dharma practice calls us to, as best we can, empty our minds of the cyclical or habitual nature of thoughts (my list of things to do, our assumptions and judgments of each other). It asks us to engage awareness of our own experience moment by moment and the conditions that perpetuate suffering (e.g., anger arising, tension held in jaw, shallow breathing, thoughts of how to respond, tightness in my jaw) that might lead to actions that create suffering. In this chapter, I introduce some principles of Buddhist psychology. As we engage in mindfulness practices, it is important to shift the psychological foundations of understanding away from themes of individualism, competition, capitalism, striving, and rationality (mind) that shape Western leisure forms. The challenge is as Aronson (2012) describes, “when we assimilate Buddhist practice into preexisting patterns, we merely introduce new context into old forms. This can ... show up in adherence to cultural norms or in more particularized reinforcement of psychological patterns” (p. 1); that is, the norms and patterns that rob us of our freedoms. This chapter addresses the questions: *How might mindfulness reshape how we experience leisure? How might mindfulness reshape how we practice, facilitate and teach, and conduct leisure research?*

Mindfulness as the Path to Deepening Leisure Experiences

While mindfulness can be simply defined as “paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn 1994, p. 4), it is also challenging to know for it is both a practice spanning back 2500 years to the fifth century B.C. (Aronson 2012) and rooted in historical and cultural contexts much different from the modern Western world. Conceptually, mindfulness is simple to define in words; however, the ongoing *practice* and knowing of mindfulness through direct experience poses significant challenge. Our attitudes, beliefs, and preconditioning often stand as barriers to experience. The value of mindfulness practice is that it becomes a mirror for each of us, “it simply reflects what is there” (Rosenberg and Guy 2004, p. 15) in how we approach experiences in the present moment.

Mindfulness brings us to a preconceptual and preconscious space before thought. There is a shift away from the driven nature of habitual thinking of the rational mind. Bishop et al. (2004) broadly conceptualize mindfulness as “a kind of nonelaborative, nonjudgmental, present-centered awareness in which each thought, feeling, or sensation that arises in the attentional field is acknowledged and accepted as is” (p. 232). As such, there is opportunity for engagement in mindfulness practice to liberate us from the conditions that limit our experiences of leisure; those that draw our attention and awareness out of this moment and the full and direct experience of our present encounter. These conditions may be our learned thoughts and assumptions (e.g., I am not good at painting, I am not a good skier, I am not tall enough to play basketball), our risk avoidance (e.g., It is not lady-like to yell during a basketball game people will think less of me), or our pleasure seeking that has us already looking to the future (e.g., if I sink this basket everyone will applaud, next time I want to ski a steeper hill).

Consider the following mindfulness practice introduced by Jon Kabat-Zinn and used in mindfulness-based practices such as mindfulness-based stress reduction (Kabat-Zinn 2005; Stahl & Goldstein 2010) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale 2013). This

practice begins with each person being given a single raisin to hold in hand. The guided meditation on the raisin begins with the instruction to treat this object as if it has never been seen or encountered before. In short, it is the mindful leisure practice of eating a raisin:

First we bring our attention to seeing the raisin, observing it carefully as if we had never seen one before. We feel its texture between our fingers and notice its colors and surfaces. We are also aware of any thoughts we might be having about raisins or food in general. We notice any thoughts and feelings of liking or disliking raisins if they come up while we are looking at it. We then smell it for a while and finally, with awareness, we bring it to our lips, being aware of the arm moving the hand to position it correctly and of salivating as the mind and body anticipate eating. The process continues as we take it into our mouth and chew it slowly, experiencing the actual taste of one raisin. And when we feel ready to swallow, we watch the impulse to swallow as it comes up, so that even that is experienced consciously. We even imagine, or “sense,” that now our bodies are one raisin heavier.

(Kabat-Zinn 2005, pp. 27–28)

Several leisure scholars argue for the strength in exploring leisure beyond the use of Western frameworks (*cf.* Arai and Kivel 2009; Dieser, Magnuson, & Scholl 2005). This same practice introduced in the raisin exercise may then be applied to any leisure experience. Kumar (2005) suggests “[a]ny activity, when done mindfully, becomes a meditation session and can help you gain experiences that can serve as the building blocks of a mindful way of living” (p. 23). This mindfulness practice provides each of us with a mirror that reflects to us the challenges that arise that keep us from fully being present to the depth and richness of leisure experience as it unfolds. This five-minute experience gives us insight into all of the challenges—wanting, aversion, restlessness, expectations, past memories, doubt—that draw us away from fully experiencing leisure. Mindfulness practices such as meditation, eating a raisin, walking, and other leisure engagements are an opportunity to actively cultivate 13 *inter-related attitudes of mindfulness*:

*Noticing when we are on autopilot,
as we practice present moment awareness,*

*and approach experiences with beginner's mind;
to grow a basic trust in self, intuition, and own authority (freedom).
Growing capacity to sit with discomfort,
enacting patience as a form of wisdom,
without judging (non-judging),
without striving or goal-orientation (non-striving, non-doing), and
without pushing experience out of consciousness.
Knowing impermanence and awakening deeper connection with self,
others, and environments (interconnectedness),
as we become aware of tendencies for disconnection and isolation.
Letting go (non-attachment) of thoughts, feelings, or situations we want
to hold on to, and
opening to acceptance and to see things as they really are without illusion,
denial, or resistance.*

This list expands upon Kabat-Zinn's (2005) seven attitudinal foundations of mindfulness practice to capture a wider array of the seeds or attitudes that must be planted for engaged mindfulness practice. Rather than list format, they are offered here, intentionally, in a poem form to represent the light, non-linear, and less rigid way in which these attitudes are held in mindfulness. In the mindfulness groups I facilitate, people often struggle to engage these attitudes at first and quickly descend into very harsh self-judgment and punitive claims against self (i.e., "I am doing this wrong!" "Oh, there I go again being on autopilot") or question the practice ("This is boring," "What am I doing this for?"). These are the very seeds of struggle for mindfulness practitioners that open up possibilities for freedom.

Noticing When We Are on Autopilot

When we engage in mindfulness practices, we begin as best we can to slow the body and chatter of the mind (monkey mind) to return to direct experience of the present moment. We shift the habitual and automatic uses of mind to create storylines (this is how it always is), to shift away from the patterned associations our beliefs draw us to (because x happened, y will inevitably result), to shift away from sorting and accounting

for things in socially constructed categories, and judgments rooted in binaries (i.e., good–not good [bad]; white–not white [black], right–not right [wrong]). So let us return to the raisin experience. The text to the left reflects the text for this guided practice. The text on the right (italics) reflects my inner experience of the practice.

This practice asks us to be fully present with experience of the raisin, without labeling it or judging it. First, feeling the object in our hand, looking at the textures, contours, reflections of light.

As I gaze at the object in the palm of my hand I see the tiny little wrinkles criss-crossing across its body. As I tilt my palm left and right, I see the light dancing across its surface.

Feel the texture of the object, notice the shape, what happens when you apply pressure.

I feel the soft object give way to the pressure of my thumb and index finger, rolling, changing shape, slightly moist. I become aware of the feeling of stickiness. This is followed by the thought of wanting to wash my hands.

Hold the object up to your nose, smelling the earthy, sweet aromas.

The instruction sounds strange to me. As I hold the raisin up to my nose and breathe in deeply I note that I have never smelled a raisin this directly. Feeling self-conscious for a moment, I wonder what it would look like if someone were passing by.

Holding the object up to your ear and hearing the sound of squishing and the raisin rolling between thumb and finger.

I wonder what it is that I am hearing. The raisin? My fingers in contact with the raisin? I notice the dull rolling sound and the slightly sharper sounds of what I imagine to be the crystals in the object.

As we begin to slow and bring awareness to the present moment encounter, we become clear about the things we began to take for granted, or the

details we missed when we were on automatic pilot. The raisin experience caused me to reflect on how when I apply the label raisin, I have reduced the object and missed the details in the way it reflects light, the way it sounds, and the way it smells. When we apply this to leisure experiences, what else are we missing when we are on autopilot?

Practicing Present Moment Awareness

For many of us the challenge arises in staying with present moment awareness, rather than spiraling into thoughts about the past or future. Whenever we move toward stillness—whether it is sitting down on the meditation cushion, eating a raisin, or engaging in mindful walking, skiing, or painting—our body becomes still or more focused while our mind becomes lost in a swirling mass of thoughts. We tend to spend most of our time caught in the replaying of past experience or the future world of planning and anticipating what is to (be)come.

As we slow things down and work with each sense, the practice asks us to be in the present moment and to simply be with the raisin. We soon notice that we are caught in ruminations from the past, such as a problem from yesterday we are trying to solve, an argument with someone that has been weighing on us, or a story about the object in our hand.

As I continue to hold this object in the palm of my hand my mind wanders to a childhood memory of the little red boxes of Sunmaid raisins people would give out at Halloween and my preference for small-sized chocolate bars. I focus my awareness back again on the raisin, noticing the colour of deep purple. Soon my mind has wandered off to my recent home decorating project and I wonder if that would be a good colour for an accent wall.

If you notice your mind has wandered, simply bring awareness back to seeing the raisin.

Catching myself, I bring my awareness back again to seeing the object in the palm of my hand. I notice the colour. Slowly I draw my gaze across the various contours of the raisin.

Drawing from the *Satipatthana Sutta*,¹ the Buddha's discourse on the four ways of establishing mindfulness, Goldstein (2013) describes that this present moment experience calls us to pay attention in "four fields, or pastures, for establishing mindfulness: body, feelings, mind, and *dhammas* (categories of experience)" with a sustained, warm, and enthusiastic contemplation of each in a way that is mindful, clearly knowing, and "free from discontent in regard to the world" (p. 3). As Garland et al. (2015) describe, in neuroscience, "this shift from evaluative processing to nonjudgmental awareness" activates different areas of the brain and brings increased integration of sensory information rather than a dominance of conceptual systems that engage in elaboration (p. 294).

Approaching with Beginner's Mind to Understand

When we approach with beginner's mind, we approach with openness, curiosity, respect, and interest with the intention to understand (Kornfield 2009). With beginner's mind, we set the intention to drop labels, assumptions, opinions, and pre-assessments we make of objects, people, and experiences.

We are invited to hold the raisin up to our lip and to notice what happens in our body.

I hold the object up to my lips and notice the feeling of saliva emerging in my mouth. I have to actively resist completing the action of placing the object in my mouth. As I let the object touch my lower lip, the sensation feels strange. I notice a feeling of revulsion in my stomach.

Now place the object in your mouth and, without biting it, roll the object around with your tongue.

With my tongue I roll the raisin against the roof of my mouth, feeling the density of the object. I begin to salivate.

¹ For more information on the *Satipatthana Sutta*, see *The Way of Mindfulness: The Satipatthana Sutta 1949* from the Majjhima Nikaya translated by Bhikku Soma and Cassius A. Pereira, Lake House, Colombo, Kessinger Publishing.

When we slow the experience down, we may see our reactions and responses rise and pass away. Both revulsion and salivation are present, and mindfulness practice enables us to see both as part of this complex experience, rather than reacting to either and pulling our self out of the present moment experience. On automatic pilot feelings of revulsion often lead to rejection or avoidance (pushing the raisin away) and salivation leads to a wanting of more (reaching for another raisin, and another). Mindfulness practice creates an opportunity for us to develop a steadiness with the complexity of experience when we return to full sensory experience. When we slow things down and stay present to moment-by-moment experience and become “free from views” (Kornfield 2009), we become open to learning and there is a capacity to grow a trust in self and intuition and embark on a path to freedom (p. 99). In “seeing what is true, the heart becomes free” (Shunryu Suzuki cited in Kornfield 2009, p. 99).

Growing Our Capacity to Sit with Discomfort, Enacting Patience as a Form of Wisdom Without Judging, Striving, or Pushing Experience Out of Consciousness

As we engage with beginner’s mind, we grow our capacity to engage a non-judgmental or compassionate stance. Mindfulness provides a point of practice to notice the chatter of associations in the mind as we bounce between past and future—thinking, judging, comparing—barely landing in the present moment. This is an opportunity to notice *when we are on autopilot* with our beliefs and expectations.

Keep chewing without swallowing the object.

I notice I am feeling hungry. I wonder when this will be over? I begin to wonder what is for dinner. Dinner is not for 3 hours. Darn. I am still chewing these little bits of raisin. I really want to swallow them and move on to the next thing. I chastise myself for being impatient. I try to stay with the experience. I notice the movement between sweet and sour as the object moves on my tongue.

This shift to non-judgment then enables us to shift out of the automatic pilot of evaluative processing. As Goldstein (2013) describes, “When

we are not mindful, not aware, then we often get lost in unwholesome reactions, creating suffering for ourselves and others” (p. 13). These challenges are tied to our *judgments* which in addition to wanting and aversion include: *restlessness* (I wonder when this will be over? I really want to swallow them and move on to the next thing), and *wandering mind* (I wonder what is for dinner today?). There is also *sleepiness* and *doubt*. When I have done this exercise with my class of undergraduate students, they report wondering “What is the point of this? What does this have to do with therapeutic recreation?”

Now take a bite without swallowing the object.

Finally! I bite down, and notice how awkward it is to bite such a small object. A burst of sweetness comes forward. I smile. I notice how full the taste is in my mouth—sour, sweet. I feel my face wrinkle up in response. I don't like sour things. Saliva glands at the back of my mouth feel activated. I feel the object, now in two on my tongue. I want to swallow the object and intentionally resist again. I want a few more, I think to myself.

As we grow our capacity to sit with discomfort, we lean in to the things we avoid and let go of things to which we grasp or cling (wanting). Boorstein (1995) describes mindfulness as “the aware, balanced acceptance of the present experience. It isn't more complicated than that. It is opening to or receiving the present moment, pleasant or unpleasant, just as it is without either clinging to it or rejecting it” (p. 60). Easier said than done. This means shifting away from our automatic response to judge things as right or wrong, pleasant or unpleasant, or desirable or undesirable and then trying to fix or control the situation based on this assessment. Instead, mindfulness invites us to simply notice moments of wanting things we deem pleasant, right, or desirable (I only have 1 raisin, I want more), and aversion to things we deem to be unpleasant, wrong, or undesirable (I do not like sour). In mindfulness practice, we attempt to walk a path on the middle ground between aversion and pleasure seeking, to simply be with what is, be it pleasure, pain, and all other aspects of experience as it unfolds in each moment. When we can be present with the whole of experience of something or someone, when we can let go of the judgment of something being good or bad, positive or negative, all

we are left with is our experience. In these moments—when pain and joy can co-exist—we can be with the profound nature of experience, we can arrive into *being*.

As we continue to shift into direct connection with sensory experience, mindfulness engages in a reconnection of mindbody. Mindfulness then is the practice of slowing down and settling in to the twin modes of *non-doing* and *being*. With a reminder to return to the body, Kabat-Zinn (2005) reminds us that mindfulness means engaging in a non-doing mode. With an emphasis on the nature of mind (the cognitive component), Teasdale, Williams, and Segal (2014) ask us to settle in to “the being mode of mind” (p. 27).

Knowing Impermanence and Awakening Deeper Connection with Self, Others, and Environments (Interconnectedness), as We Become Aware of Tendencies for Disconnection and Isolation

Mindfulness begins to shift our relationship to ourselves, physical and emotional pain, mindbody, and to relationships. We come to know the many ways of impermanence and interconnectedness: “Wisdom arises when we pay attention to impermanence in ways we may already know but often overlook” (Goldstein 2013, p. 31). This includes the relationship of thought to emotion and emotion to thought and how each conditions the other (Goldstein 2013)

Keep chewing without swallowing the object and expand awareness to include your mouth, your whole body, the community, the country.

I bring awareness to the mouth that holds this raisin. I notice the tightness in my jaw as I will myself to hold on to the last piece of raisin that sits on my tongue. As I expand to bring awareness to my whole body holding this object I notice I am leaning to the left. I shift my posture to stack one vertebrae on top of the other and a deeper breath becomes possible. As I move outward to take in the whole country of Canada, the thought arises that this grape did not originate here. Soon my mind begins to wonder about the origins of this object. I become aware of the distance this one object has travelled and all of the resources needed to bring it here.

As I begin to “see” the raisin, I become aware of how I am grasping to it and also the myriad of conditions that have arisen for this raisin to be here (e.g., water and nutrients needed to grow the raisin, people to care and tend to the fruit, and all that was needed to transport the raisin to this moment). As we let go of our thoughts and judgments (attentional fixation, rumination), we may open more fully to the experience, “while enhancing sensory awareness of stressor’s broader socioenvironmental context” (Garland et al. 2015, pp. 298–299). In understanding the interconnection with all things, compassion is able to emerge (Kornfield 2009).

Letting Go (Non-attachment) to Thoughts, Feelings, or Situations We Want to Hold on to and Opening to Acceptance to See Things as They Really Are Without Illusion, Denial, or Resistance

Mindfulness asks us to deeply engage in a process of letting go of the constructs and frames of reference that we have learned, engrained, and habitually use to connect with ourselves and others as we negotiate being in the world. This process is deeply tied to the process of compassion. As Christina Feldman (2005) explains:

Love asks you to let go; compassion asks you to let go. Your capacity to be wholeheartedly present for anyone or anything in this world asks you to release your longing for how things used to be and your yearning for a better future. Letting go frees you to take your seat firmly in this moment and in the truth of loss and change.

(p. 114)

Mindfulness practice shifts our connections with our self and, in doing so, creates changes in our engagement with others. Through daily mindfulness practice, we begin to see the constructs we impose on self and others—constructs that keep us separate or divided. As Pema Chodron (1997) describes in *When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times*,

Only in an open, non-judgmental space can we acknowledge what we are feeling. Only in an open space where we're not caught up in our own version of reality can we see and hear and feel who others really are, which allows us to be with them and communicate with them properly.

(p. 78)

As we engage in practices of non-judgmental awareness, we also shift our capacity for social connection. Shifting away from thinking about relationships as transactional or as resources, Aronson (2012) describes, “two other bases upon which to consider relationships with others: engaged concern (compassion and love) and an absence of fixated connection (non-attachment)” (p. 204).

Engaging Insight Leisure in Practice, Teaching, and Research in Leisure Studies

Various disciplines and professions incorporate mindfulness practices to address physical and mental health, enrich teaching, leadership and therapeutic practices, and deepen spiritual understandings (Kumar 2005; Langer and Moldoveanu 2000; McGarvey 2010; Miller et al. 1998).

What if we engage insight leisure in practice, teaching, and research in leisure studies? This is the focus of the remaining section in this chapter. Rooted in a deeply engaged practice of mindfulness, I would like to introduce the notion of *insight leisure* to differentiate it from other leisure practices that are documented in our literature. To engage in insight leisure is to deeply experience what leisure is (a being mode), the being of and with the “full catastrophe” of leisure rather than what it does (a doing mode). Insight leisure cultivated through mindfulness embodies the following:

- clear seeing: able to see situations more clearly;
- presence: able to engage authentically (while inwardly attending with receptivity and ability to extend);
- capacity to see and respond to complexity: capacity to respond more effectively to complex or difficult situations;

- resiliency: able to find more balance in leisure, work, home, and in relationship without tending toward exhaustion and automatic pilot;
- creativity: capacity to be more creative; and
- spiritual ardency: “the wellspring of a courageous heart” (Goldstein 2013, p. 4) which provides the capacity to continue through all of the difficulties of the life journey.

In deep connection to ourselves, others, and experiences, spirit awakens. As we engage in an ongoing consistent practice of mindfulness, we begin to experience a deeper connection with self and become less susceptible to the vagaries of power emanating from social constructions embedded in our external world. Therein lies the connection to freedom—it becomes possible to exist in deeper connection with self, others, and the material and in deeper connection to creativity, play, and the sacred in leisure experiences.

Insight leisure has implications for practices, teaching and leadership, and research in leisure studies. Notice that in the previous paragraph, I stated that insight leisure *embodies* the following. I did not write that it leads to (outcomes) the aspects of experience described above. This is not a causal relationship that is often found in mindfulness research (i.e., if we engage in mindfulness we will achieve x, y, z); that is, we cannot do insight leisure as a striving to achieve particular outcomes as this does not embrace the attitudes of mindfulness. Rather, these aspects of experience (presence, spiritual ardency) are interwoven within the cultivation of mindfulness, and they are not separable or able to be reduced from the practice. In this way, we are called to approach mindfulness and insight leisure as practitioners, educators, and researchers in a different way. A mindfulness approach adds alternative ways of knowing and *being* focused on acceptance of people just as they are, while exploring processes that allow practitioners, participants, and researchers to be *present-centered*; attending to the *present moment* with curiosity and openness; and to accept sensation, emotions, and thoughts non-judgmentally. Introducing mindfulness as content provides participants with opportunities to view self compassionately, to think clearly about needs, and be curious about present choices.

While explorations of mindfulness are quite limited in leisure studies, it has been taken up in explorations of leisure (*cf.* Gim 2009; Sanford 2007), therapeutic recreation (*cf.* Arai et al. 2016a, b; Carruthers and Hood 2011; Curtis et al. 2015; Dattilo 2015), community development (*cf.* Arai and Tepylo 2016), and tourism (*cf.* Nawjin 2011). Gim (2009) introduces mindfulness through some of the ideas found in Buddhist texts. Carruthers and Hood (2011) describe mindfulness in relation to savoring, happiness, and flourishing in their leisure and well-being model. Arai, Griffin, and Grau (2016a, b) explore mindfulness and sensorimotor aspects of outdoor adventure experiences in relation to cognitive flexibility, self-knowledge, and healing in the aftermath of trauma and eating disorders. Curtis et al. (2015) explore yoga and post-traumatic stress disorder, and Sanford (2007) describes white-water kayaking as a ritual practice. Sanford (2007) describes kayaking as an embodied encounter with the sacred mediated through physical performance in the water. Negotiating risks requires skill, awareness of the river, and embodied mindfulness. Narayanan and Macbeth (2009) found tourists develop a growing sense of self-awareness in the desert. However, neither solitude nor activities necessarily bring mindfulness; quieting the mind comes with specific training. Nawjin (2011) explores mindfulness to enhance happiness during travel experiences. These areas of exploration are leading us to a new way forward in thinking about leisure. As we continue on this journey of mindfulness in practices of leisure, it is also important to embed explorations in embodied practices as the basis for knowing mindfulness. This will help to disrupt the imposition of Western thinking on mindfulness so that we do not fall into some of the critiques raised in studies of mindfulness. These critiques and a different way forward are the focus of the following sections.

How Might We Embrace Buddhist Psychology?

The roots of leisure studies in Western notions of developmental psychology have emphasized the role of leisure in tasks of individuation, separation, and attachment. Previously, as these concepts were taken up in

practices like therapeutic recreation, there was a tendency to emphasize the individual's needs or deficits and the qualities that will manifest independent functioning. Instead, Buddhism reveals to us a different set of qualities about leisure, which emphasize the mind's capacity for wisdom, love, and compassion as the conditions for leisure practices, and caring as the spiritual equivalent of developmental tasks such as attachment, separation, and individuation. As a challenge to the emphasis on autonomy and individualism in leisure studies, Buddhism reveals much to us about the relational capacity of leisure and the idea of "social interdependence" (Aronson 2012).

How Might We Avoid Reducing Mindfulness Practice to Activity?

As mindfulness is taken up more in practices of leisure, recreation, therapeutic recreation, and tourism, we need to avoid reducing mindfulness practices to activity or physical activity. At times, the concept of mindfulness is thinly used and connoted with having an awareness of something but without connecting it to the engaged practices of mindfulness (*cf.* critique by Holloway et al. 2011) described in the first half of this chapter. We have seen this beginning to happen when yoga and martial arts are offered at recreation centers and offered as activity by a practitioner who is not rooted in mindfulness practice. It is important to keep in mind that the presence and cultivation of the foundational attitudes of mindfulness are central to any practice. For example, while the West often approaches yoga and the martial arts as physical activity, the foundation for both revolves around meditation, mindfulness, and harmonizing with the universe. As Eastern practices continue to be taken up in the West, will need to avoid the assumptions that when yoga and martial arts are offered in practice that they are necessarily engaged practices of mindfulness. Mindfulness cannot be reduced to a technique or strategy that can be taught in a three-hour workshop, nor is it an appeal to lofty and permanent goals (a forever wakened or enlightened state).

How Might We Avoid Reducing Mindfulness to Goal Orientation and Fixing Problems?

There is a large body of literature that connects mindfulness practice to reductions in stress (Kabat-Zinn 2005), depression (Barnhofer and Crane 2009; Teasdale et al. 2014; Williams, et al. 2007), anxiety (Greeson and Brantley 2009; Stahl et al. 2014), eating disorders (Wolever and Best 2009), addictions (Bien and Bien 2002; Bien 2009; Bowen et al. 2011), and pain (Burch and Penman 2013; Gardner-Nix 2009). It is important to understand that mindfulness is not used to fix problems; it is not a rational process of mind. Mindfulness is a deeper practice of cultivating insight which itself has no goal. Mindfulness as it is taken up in the West is being reduced when we do not shift out of a goal orientation. When we focus the provision of leisure pursuits and activities on participation and problem identification (i.e., engaging in the *doing* of leisure to increase health benefits, develop socially appropriate skills, or increase community well-being), we limit our understandings of insight leisure and mindfulness. It is important not to lose sight that these “outcomes” are connected to a deeper practice of cultivation. We are wise to remember Kabat-Zinn’s (2005) words that as you engage in your own practice of mindfulness meditation, you “will come to know something for yourself about your own not knowing. It is not that mindfulness is the ‘answer’ to all life’s problems. Rather it is that all life’s problems can be seen more clearly” (pp. 25–26).

How Might We Shift Awareness from Doing to Explorations of Being?

This shift to an emphasis on *being* has begun to emerge in therapeutic recreation with mindfulness integrated into programs and individual practices of recreation therapists. For example, cultivating mindfulness is central for engaging trauma survivors in experiential leisure exercises and psychoeducation to explore the impact of trauma and leisure in their lives (Arai et al. 2008). Mindfulness reflects values inherent in *leisure* such as choice, expression of oneself, and nourishing one’s well-being. Instead of a leisure or therapeutic recreation professional as an *expert* applying standardized

frames of activity or treatment, mindfulness enables practitioner and participant to dwell in the deep of one's own processes, open to exploring the whole catastrophe of the present moment with curiosity. Mindfulness cannot be solely reduced to a treatment per se for depression or anxiety; however, it does support a shift in awareness to present moment experience rather than ruminations of the past (depression) and worry and panic about the future (anxiety) and supports noticing and steadying oneself in the impermanence of experience (e.g., pain, joy, sadness).

How Might We Shift from Hedonism to Explore Meaning Making, Savoring, and Eudaimonia?

A growing body of literature in neuroscience and Buddhist psychology explores the inner workings of mindfulness. For example, Garland et al. (2015) make the connection between mindfulness, cognitive flexibility, narrative meaning making, and eudaimonia. As they state:

mindfulness introduces flexibility into the creation of autobiographical meaning, stimulating the natural human capacity to positively reappraise adverse events and savor the positive aspects of experience. By fostering positive reappraisals and emotions, mindfulness may generate deep eudaimonic meanings that promote resilience and engagement with a valued and purposeful life.

(Garland et al. 2015, pp. 295–296)

These authors connect “hedonic adaptation” as playing an important role in minimizing the psychological impact of negative life events. In contrast, an emphasis on mindfulness practice in relation to eudaimonia is connected to “a sustainable, positive trajectory of stress resilience and well-being” (Garland et al. 2015, p. 296).

How Might We Create Conditions that Support Letting Go?

In an attempt, I think, to foster letting go, we have turned at times in leisure studies, tourism, and therapeutic recreation to the creation of

sacred environments and spaces. For example, tourism often focuses on the creation of retreats and pilgrimages. This calls for us to be aware of connection to sacred environments but also awareness of the complex conditions they create (e.g., for racialized groups with complex histories of colonization). As we turn to practices of mindfulness, we will need to expand our consciousness and also capacity to be with the emotions and sensations that come with insight in these sacred spaces. Emotions that we often suppress may arise (e.g., anger, sadness) as we become aware of the oppressions imposed in built environments, in the creation of place, and the social constructions of relationships and identities. With an emphasis on impermanence, these too will need space to rise and pass. This raises a call for *ardency* in leisure practitioners. To be ardent is to use a balanced and sustained application of effort. As Goldstein (2013) describes, spiritual ardency “is the wellspring of a courageous heart. It gives us the strength to continue through all the difficulties of the journey. The question for us is how to practice and cultivate ardency, so that it becomes a powerful and onward-leading force in our lives” (Goldstein 2013, p. 3). Too often though, we have tended toward further oppression, silencing, or rendering invisible experiences and others who bring to consciousness experiences of oppression.

How Might We Embrace Paradox in Leisure Studies?

Mindfulness requires that we have theoretical frameworks and methodologies that move away from reductionism and the creation of binaries or dualisms in our research approaches. Too often, there are assumptions inherent in leisure research that all leisure activity is good activity associated with positive benefits with a blindness to the more challenging or painful aspects of leisure. We also become fixated on beliefs or thoughts that there is a single universal truth. As we bring a mindfulness framework to explore insight leisure in contexts such as therapeutic recreation, heritage, nature, wildlife, outdoor recreation, and wellness/spiritual retreats, we will need to embrace paradox and multiplicity.

Mindfulness and Buddhism offer us one approach to embracing paradox (others include knowledge from other Eastern traditions,

indigenous knowledge, existentialism). Embracing paradox is the call to shift away from Cartesian thinking to explore intersecting pairs such as choice–responsibility, connection–isolation, living–dying, and meaning–meaninglessness (Farley 2008; van Deurzen-Smith 1997). Embracing paradox means being with the whole catastrophe of these experiences and engaging lenses and methodologies that allow us to open to the broad aspects of being. For example, the literature on pilgrimage tourism touts the connection to “trials of the spirit,” encountering the “other,” self-transformation and self-realization, as well as contemplation, meditation, silence, and rituals connected to sacred sites, religious or spiritual practices, and individual desires. Insight leisure asks us to embrace the paradox, it is this too, and also asks that we open with beginner’s mind to colonizing histories, past and present, as well as power relationships and the complex impact of intersecting economies.

When we are able to engage in paradoxical thinking (and paradoxical experience), we relinquish the division between right-wrong, subjectivity-objectivity, masculine-feminine and engage in a “both/and perspective” (Farley 2008) to open up space for other possibilities. This asks us to embrace multiplicity—the understanding that “each individual is unique and thus will experience their world in a completely unique way, we also have to agree that our individual experiences, even of the same phenomenon, will result in unique perceptions and responses” (Farley 2008, p. 22). As Farley (2008) describes, this calls us to see:

the human journey as an experience wrought with profound possibility; with awareness that all aspects of our being encompass both the good and the bad, the masculine and feminine, the right and the wrong. It is our willingness to accept this and to make our choices in life accordingly that affords us the gift of living a meaningful and balanced life.

There are many paradoxes to be explored. Here we can also include exploration of the eight worldly dharmas—pleasure and pain, gain and loss, fame and disgrace, and praise and blame. As the teaching describes, it is becoming immersed in these four pairs of opposites that keeps us stuck in the pain of *samsara* (suffering) as we grasp at the first aspect of each

pair and attempt to avoid the second aspect. Chodron (1997) reminds us that these pairs we create are “nothing concrete in themselves,” that we make up the eight worldly dharmas “as we react to what happens to us in the world” (p. 47). Nor are we or our paradigms, theories, and fields of study including leisure, therapeutic recreation, and tourism, “all that solid either” (Chodron 1997, p. 47).

A Present Moment Awareness of Insight Leisure

Rather than a conclusion, I end this chapter with a statement that what I reflected on these pages is itself impermanent and rife with complexities and paradoxes. Despite two and a half centuries of texts on Buddhism and mindfulness, we enter into this exploration of insight leisure as a true beginner. I have offered here some foundational ideas that I think are useful to leisure studies, and also some of the perils of exploration to avoid as we embark on this adventure. There is much depth and richness that awaits to enliven and awaken possibilities for freedom and justice in leisure studies. The path forward for leisure studies will be to continue these various threads of exploration and new avenues for insight, mindfully.

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