

Mindfulness



The following principles are derived from the ancient Rule of Benedict of Nursia who lived in the fifth century and left behind a great deal of wisdom.

Awareness of the sacred in life holds the world together, and the lack of awareness and sacred care is tearing it apart.

Mindfulness is a blend of harmony, awareness and balance. This includes spending time well, treating the world and all things as sacred, and not confusing one's wants with needs. Small actions are seen as global in scope and meaning – being faithful in little things implies faithfulness in big things. With today's world – an interlocking global village – in deep trouble, those who are mindful can through their small, but consistent positive actions regain one inch of the planet at a time.

Mindfulness sees everything as one – the people of the earth, the resources, and the products. Each is to be cared for well and used without hurting the others. Also, a positive transformation should occur on all fronts – the land from barren to bountiful, thinking from scattered to centred, relationships from exploitative to ennobling. Care needs to be taken not to accumulate things we don't need which separate us from life and imprison us. Becoming prisoners of consumption, we are owned by the artifacts we have hoarded, rather than owning them.

Time is another commodity that a mindful person will learn to respect. It should be spent on spiritual pursuits of prayer and sacred reading, work to serve others, community participation to share, and finally sufficient rest to rejuvenate, each in a balanced way, without exaggerating any aspect. Every person has all the time there is, but in order to remain balanced and in harmony, we need to take time for the important things, ensuring that nothing is neglected. Life can be seen as a medley of multiple dimensions or facets – the natural, spiritual, social, productive, physical, and personal – each of which must be accommodated and developed. This is what makes people fully alive.

Cultivating the awareness of manifestation of the divine in all things takes reflection, prayer, and the wisdom of others. Life needs to be worked through – willingness is needed to deal with what we are, where we are, and why. Time (slowing down) and conscious effort is required for this kind of contemplation which will broaden our perspective, enabling us to live life to the full.

Reference:

Joan Chittister, **Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today** (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), chapter 6.

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