

GOOD LIFE PRACTICE

Mindfulness:

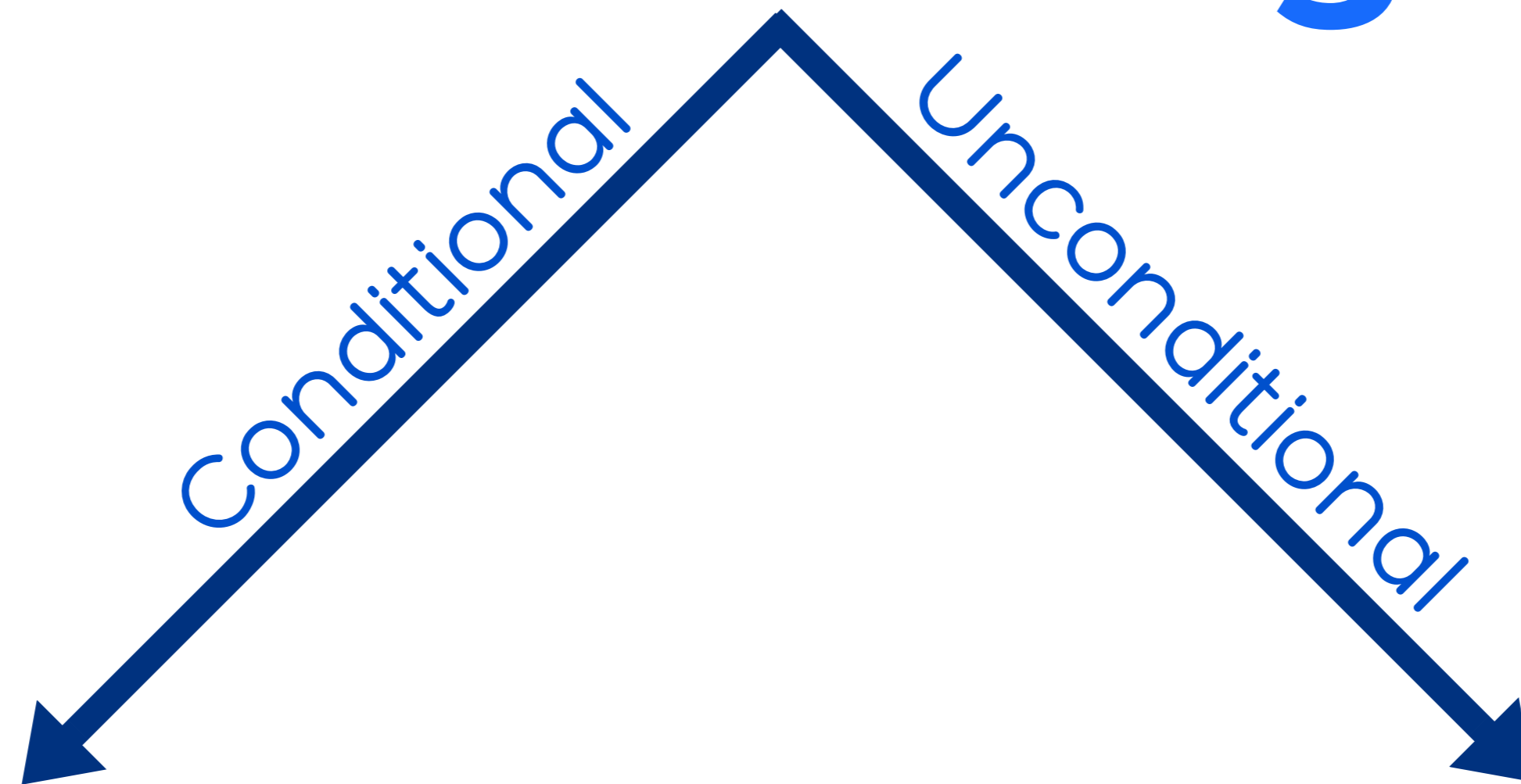
Focus First On the Adults

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Well-Being

Our genetics as well as our physical, social, and political environments affect our well-being. While we can have some influence on these things, they are largely outside our control.



What we practice-- the skills we cultivate and how we respond to events in our lives -- is largely within our control and has a significant impact on our well-being.

What shows up

Events Weather People

Thoughts Sensations Reactions

What we practice

Training Response

Clean drinking water, adequate nutrition, shelter, healthcare, and education are foundational for well-being. Beyond these needs, the majority of our well-being depends on what we practice -- how we use our time and energy.

Modern society is increasingly over-emphasizing the conditional aspects of well-being.

This over-emphasis is actually increasing our unhappiness. Anxiety, depression, narcissism, stress, and helplessness have been on the rise for several decades.

There is a strong, direct correlation between the skills of self-regulation and overall well-being

Behavior

Although it is a skill, self-regulation is often confused with motivation

Behavioral self-regulation is the skill of aligning actions with goals, values, commitments and relationships.

Emotion

Working skillfully with emotions is the foundation for behavioral self-regulation

Emotional self-regulation includes knowing what you are feeling, accepting feelings as part of being human, and using them as information rather than obstacles or commands.

Attention

Attentional skill is the foundation for emotional self-regulation

Attentional self-regulation includes knowing where your attention is, aiming and sustaining attention on a chosen object and returning attention when it wanders.



Be With

Everything has its wonders, even darkness and silence, and I learn, whatever state I may be in, therein to be content. ~ Helen Keller

Autopilot:

- You are just sitting there and you have an itch. Reflexively, you reach up and scratch it. It all happens so quickly that it doesn't really occur to you that you have a choice not to scratch.
- A coworker, a partner, or a friend says something. You feel angry, hurt, or annoyed. Reflexively, you make a cutting remark, you get silent, or you leave and find someone to complain to. It all happens so quickly that it doesn't really occur to you that you have a choice.

We are human, this means that events around us trigger conditioned sensations and thoughts within us. Some of our sensations and thoughts are useful and some are not. Some are comfortable and some are not. When these sensations and thoughts show up, we are conditioned to behave in particular ways. Some of our behavior really works and some of it does not.

The practice of observing, accepting, and having compassion for all of this is the foundation of a more conscious life. I call this practice Being With. In fact, if you read no further and simply adopted a daily practice for Being With your surroundings, thoughts, and sensations, you would learn a lot about what you are really capable of.

Being With is the practice and skill of seeing and accepting events, sensations, and thoughts for what they are. This creates the space and opportunity to act based on important values, goals, and relationships rather than mindlessly pursuing comfort and avoiding discomfort. This is a source of incredible personal power. When we can be with whatever shows up, we can see the choices we have over which internal resources we cultivate and how we respond to our circumstances.

Being with is a practice that creates space for us to see choices that have been hidden by conditioning and habit.

Practicing Being With

Learning how to be still, to really be still and let life happen - that stillness becomes a radiance. ~ Morgan Freeman

Intention

- To meet what is going on internally and externally with awareness and acceptance
- To gain deeper insight into the experience of being a conditioned human being
- To notice when your attention has wandered and simply bring it back

You may discover restlessness, anxiety, tension, and busyness of the mind. You may find that your experience is pleasant and relaxed. You may find sensations in the body, and emotions and thoughts of all kinds. No matter how comfortable or uncomfortable you find your internal experience to be, this is all normal. The intention is to be with whatever you find when you pay attention.

All human beings feel discomfort. We all feel anxiety about whether we are good enough. A greater awareness of your internal landscape can strengthen your connection to others as you gain insight and compassion for the internal experience that is universal to all human beings.

A wandering attention is normal. The more we are aware of when it has wandered, the more readily we can bring it back to what matters most to us. We can get distracted or thrown by a situation, and we can return our attention to the values, goals, and relationships that are most important to us.

Being with is not about:

- Clearing your mind
- Feeling relaxed or happy
- Avoiding, suppressing, indulging, or resisting what you are thinking or feeling

Practicing Being With

Silence is a source of great strength. ~ Lao Tzu

Choose a consistent time

Practicing this at the same time everyday is more effective than practicing when you feel like it.

Set a timer

Choose a time between 2-10 minutes and commit to practice for the entire time

Find a solid posture

Sit or stand so that you are upright and taking responsibility for supporting your neck and shoulders

Open your chest and allow your shoulders to drop

Find a place to put your hands so that they can remain still

You can close your eyes or you can look gently downward

Find the sensations of the breath

You may notice movement in your stomach as you breathe. You may notice the rising and falling of your chest. You may notice breath moving over your upper lip, through your nostrils, or in the back of your throat. Wherever you find the sensations of breathing, rest your attention there.

Notice, accept and return

Your attention is almost guaranteed to wander. This is normal. When you notice that it has wandered, you can simply accept that and return your attention to the sensations of the breath. You may also notice boredom, restlessness, annoyance, or any other feelings -- you can accept these are part of the process and return attention to the sensations of the breath. That's all.