

Paying attention to technology: Email, Facebook, texting, twitter, etc.

Introduction

As we've already seen in our explorations with mindfulness, to be mindful is to be attentive to *some aspects* of what is happening in the present moment with a curious, open, non-judgmental mind. Observing our relationship to life in this way, we may notice, for example, that we are feeling anxious or happy; that our breathing is quick and shallow, or slow and deep; that our mind is noisy with thoughts or relatively quiet; that we are very reactive.

Mindfulness deployed in this way gives us the ability to assess our moment-to-moment quality of life and to see how our activities in the world affect our inner states, as well as how our inner states affect what we do and how we do it and how our inner states affect others. If we observe these qualities over time, we will inevitably see them change.

The assignment:

1. Select one aspect of your use of technology (e.g., email, Facebook, texting, going on the Web twitter, etc.) and bring mindful attention to it at least once each day for the next 7 days. Mindful attention means attention to sensations and energy in the body, thoughts, and emotions.

Keep a log, which simply has 4 columns (see other side) of this paper. Entries might look like this:

Felt some anxiety before I opened the text—a kind of pit in my stomach
I thought “What if I didn’t get the job.”
Felt excited--palms a bit sweaty
I thought “I bet s/he said yes!”

2. Reflect on what you noticed from bringing mindfulness to this aspect of technology including patterns you observed. This will be a long paragraph.

3. As a result of this mini-exploration, are you considering any changes in your use of technology? Bring those thoughts to class.

Here are suggestions for what you might pay attention to and notice:

Most of you will notice much more; this is just to get you going.

Before:

Notice how you feel (your breathing, your bodily state, your thoughts and emotions, your attentiveness) just before you begin.

Do you feel a pull (positive or negative)? What does that anticipation feel like?

During:

Notice how you feel when you first see the screen. Does it bring up certain emotional reactions and/or changes in body state and breathing?

Notice how you feel when you read or write on the screen.

What kind and quality of attention do different emails, texts, screens ask of you, and what kind and quality do you actually give them?

How do your bodily, emotional, and attentional states change over the course of each session?

After:

Notice how you feel (your breathing, your bodily state, your emotions, your attentiveness) just after you finish.

Did you find it difficult to stop, and if so, why?

Do you become more energized or enervated (tired)? More or less alert?

Date	Before	While	After

What patterns did you notice about your relationship to technology and how it affects you?