MindfulDevMag

Mindfulness for Developers

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Ethics meets Technology

When you start meditating, you will sooner than later face your inner demons. Don't run away, stay calm and change your life.

Jens – MindfulDevMag

Content

Mindfulness and Ethics?

When a Western comes in contact with mindfulness, it is usually in a secular way. It is solely focused on the mind and how it can help one to overcome anxiety, stress and more with a set of exercises. Practical and stripped off of all spiritual or religious aspects.

This is great because it lowers the barrier of entry. No matter what your belief system is, you can practice mindfulness and gain the benefits. No strings attached.

However, there is more we can learn from the mindfulness origins. Ethics for example.

When you take a step closer to the Buddhist origins, you will notice soon it is actually about living a rightful life. Not for itself but to reach the ultimate goal of Buddhism, the nirvana. If you fail, you'll be reborn and have another go until you finally manage it.

Parts of this rightful life are things like not lying, not killing, no attacking, no backtalk, not harming animals or the environment, only take as much as you need, and many more.

When we put the spirituals aside, it is essentially rules for living peacefully together in groups. Sounds familiar?

I bet it is, no matter your belief system; probably any religion has those. What I find interesting though is that religions share a basic set of rules like about lying to or killing each other.

It seems there is a universal set of rules all humans come up with when living in groups. The most apparent no-brainer is the not-killing anyone.

What mindfulness adds to the table is that a lot of problems originate in our brain and the world it creates. It constantly eva-

luates, interprets and judges what is around us. It even does that when we try to sleep.

So, problems are not necessary real but quite often perceived and made up by our brain. A standard set of ethics guidelines aka rules can be a great help dealing with that shit. Instead of wrestling every time with our mind, we use those guides and silence that stupid voice in our head. Those guidelines always remember us of what is important and what not. It makes practicing easier, helps us become better and thus the world a better place.

[jb]

To meditate means to go home to yourself. Then you know how to take care of the things that are happening inside you, and you know how to take care of the things that happen around you.

Thich Nhat Hanh – Buddhist monk

5 Common Mindfulness Meditation Mistakes We Can Overcome Smartly

1. Meditate When Tired

2. Having Expectations

3. Fighting the Wandering Mind

4. Ignoring the Inside

5. No Regular Practice

> **Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally.**
>
> Jon Kabat–Zinn

In the modern competitive world, we are usually in the mode where we have to achieve, reach, gain, measure something or compare our results or work with others. By being aware of all of this, giving time for ourselves is vital for finding balance in life. The mindfulness practice of breath awareness is a simple yet profound way of knowing ourselves better and inviting more peace, energy, calmness, and harmony into our lives.

By committing ourselves to regular practice, we will develop our "meditation muscle." So, here are the smart solutions to overcome 5 common mindfulness meditation mistakes.

1. Don't Meditate When You Are Tired

If we are tired, exhausted or feeling sleepy, meditating can be tricky. We may stay awake in that kind of state, but we will certainly lack the concentration and focus. In that case, the best solution is to go to bed and get some restful sleep. As Dalai Lama said: "Sleep is the best meditation."

Focusing on the object of our meditation, a breath, will be easier when we respect our need to sleep first. Mindfulness meditation is effective when we are fully awake and alert.

2. Let Go of Expectations

For the beginners there can be many questions or concerns playing on repeat in mind:

Will this practice help me get rid of stress? Will this practice do this or that? Am I getting better at it? How can I know the results? I don't feel what others experienced during the meditation...Why don't I experience the relaxation, right away?...

Those are all expectations. Some of them come from others or the outside world; the rest of them come from ourselves, our inner world. In this way, we are attached to an outcome. We are waiting for something

to happen and thinking about the way things are supposed to be. All of them can mislead us. When we let go of expectations, we allow the things to unfold in the present moment as they are. We allow ourselves to experience unique moments. In other words, we allow ourselves to simply be and uniquely experience or respond to anything that reveals itself to us.

The only thing we can do before starting with the practice is to set an intention to be kind and gentle to ourselves. By speaking it out loud or in our mind: May I be kind to myself. May I be gentle to me. After we set the intention, it is important to let it go and focus on breathing.

3. Be Friends With the Wandering Mind

In the beginning, it can be very difficult to pay attention to the breath. The mind may wander at different stages of our mindful journey. Various thoughts, emotions, images, feelings or sensations may appear and that's all right. They can be experienced as unpleasant, pleasant or neutral. When we stop fighting them and embrace them as they are, we become a witness to their transient nature. They all come and go.

Each time we notice that our mind starts wandering, we recognize it as it is and, gently bring our attention back to our breath and its path. We become friends with our wandering minds. We become friends with ourselves.

4. Meditation Is About Connection Not Disconnection

Since early childhood, many of us have been taught to seek the answers by relying on the knowledge and systems that came from our teachers, family members, and society. Now, we may ask ourselves: How much have we explored ourselves? Where can we find the true answers?

Well, we find the true answers when we close our eyes and look deep within. When we meditate, we usually turn our attention inwards, not outwards. In this way, we are not disconnected from the outside world, but more connected to ourselves and the world around us. By paying attention to our natural breath path, the subtle changes in our body, we become more aware of our own energy.

Meditation helps us reduce our own mind chatter and "the external noise" that distracts us from getting in touch with our wisdom and gaining new insights. It is about connecting with ourselves first and be compassionate to ourselves and others. Mindfulness teaches us to really listen to and give our friends, loved ones, children, co-workers, and others our undivided attention.

5. Commit to Regular Practice With No Judgement

When we first start to meditate, we may wonder whether we do it right or wrong and so on. Keeping on practicing while thinking about these kinds of questions is the opposite of what the mindfulness meditation is. By bringing back our attention to our breathing, we are in the present moment, mindful and open to learning about ourselves. The moment thoughts come to us, we notice them as they are and let them fade away in their own way with no judgment. By doing it for a few minutes per day or gradually longer we will experience its benefits. Making it as our daily practice will impact our lives on multiple levels: emotional, mental, physical, social and other. Also, if we include it, for example, in our gym exercises or as the part of other activities, we can boost the mentioned and experience them on a much deeper level as well.

Being aware of the inner and outer expectations, the state we're in, our mind wandering, judgments is the important step in overcoming the common mistakes. In this way, we consistently develop our mindfulness meditation practice on a daily basis. By regularly attuning ourselves to our breathing we will balance our body, mind and the overall well–being.

[jr]

Never forget your mindfulness practice anymore!

Learn more at

mindfuldevmag.com/mindful-moments-reminder

Ethics and Software Development

Ethics can be a complex topic, but you will end up here eventually when you start to reflect yourself and your doings. Regardless of practicing mindfulness or not. You will question your doings and those of others.

I don't think there is a universal right or wrong in every aspect, but I think we can safely assume that there is a not-harming-others common ground in most ethics system. In this article I'll try to investigate it from the point of software development and why I think we need it.

Why do we need ethics?

Ethics are a pillar of living together in groups. Let's see them as a set of rules which are not necessary law but help with living in groups nonetheless. You can break them without being legally punished, but you might get penalized by other humans socially. Sometimes there is an overlap.

Harming animals might be one. Depending on your country it might be against the law or not. However, chances are high others are against it and punish one socially for it. Or in the worst case, one is penalized by the internet folks.

Does it affect me?

As a developer, you might think, software is neither good nor bad. The people using it make it good or bad. That's what scientists say too.

This point of view makes it extremely easy for the developer to put all thoughts about rights and wrongs aside and hand over the responsibility to some unknown instance. Now ones' mind is clean and pure. At least on the surface.

But that is illusive. It will come back. It will definitely come back when you embrace mindfulness. A hard part about it is that it will confront you with topics you buried deep down. You can now face it or run away like before. It is your choice, I won't judge you.

Can data harm someone?

I'll skip the apparent weapon technology discussion. Creating robots or things that make boom might be cool, but building cluster bombs with the sole purpose of killing people?

Doing stuff with data, on the other hand, is not so obvious all the time. At the surface, individual data is irrelevant as is the person behind those data. Facebook does not care about you as a person or your single data points. At this detail level, it is uninteresting. You and your data are only attractive in the form of groups. Groups, one can sell to. And the more they know about you, the more groups you will belong to. And companies can market to you.

At this level, the harm a dev building such a system can do is pretty small or maybe non-existent. It becomes a whole different story when we move a level above. Now we operate on groups, and that's where people are eager to influence. Not only for selling product ads but for voting or social movements and what not.

And we have seen a lot of those data and algorism effects on Facebook in recent years; like voting manipulations and the ever-rising hate.

One could blame now the people misusing the tech. But if we are honest, it also brings the ethics dilemma back to devs. Because devs built a system to collect those data. Devs made those algorisms.

Could they foresee it? Maybe.

Can they fix it now?

Probably. But in a way, many do not think about. By quitting.

If your ethics are switched on, you will notice that this actually harms society. Society is humans. You should not hurt others. So, mostly a dev should stop building or supporting those systems. Unfortunately, many devs outsourced those ethics to the unknown and still want to work at those companies.

Numbers

We don't even need complex data for doing harm. Numbers are enough. Like in the price of rice and other food. Do devs actually think that building a trading system for food resources does anything right?

It is a technical challenge. Devs love that as scientists do. Yet, both seldom think about the consequences of their work.

Now, we have bots trading on those markets and ruining the price for people actually depending on those resources.

Intentionally

Many times devs are not doing those things intentionally. Sure, putting a microphone into a smart device without telling anyone might be an error or happen by accident but collecting user data in a health app and uploading them to Facebook without telling anyone is probably not. Either the SDK devs or the app devs knew what their code will do, and they implemented this functionality intentionally.

Comes in many faces

It is not limited to those big topics. It starts with your company. Do you even know what your employer is actually selling? Do you care? Can you stand behind it? Can you tell your daughter straight into the face what you are doing there?

If not, there might be an ethical conflict inside you. One you could address before it is too late.

Switch your ethics on

Ethics are essential that we can face ourselves each day in the mirror. If you can't look your mirror image in the eyes, there is probably something you are ashamed of. And whatever it is, it will emerge pretty fast when you practice mindfulness. Don't bury it again, accept your doing and change your life, so you are not ashamed of yourself anymore. We only have one life, except as a Buddhist we have several tries.

Live aligned with your ethics

We do not have to have the same ethics. It is your life, not mine. Ours will be close enough anyway. However, align your life to your ethics. Only code that is compliant with your standards.

Porn is against your ethics, do not work there. Trading is bad for you, do not work there. Your employer sells shit you don't stand behind, change your job. Devs have the luxury of being picky.

And helping the world to change once again to the better.

[jb]

Find Your Why
an excerpt

I have gone through most of my life without knowing why I was doing, or had not done, something. While I wasn't aware of this lack of knowledge, I suppose I did try to subconsciously find the answer by asking questions such as:

• Why do you still do this job?
• What do you actually want?
• How do you want to go on living your life?

However, through all of my consistent pondering, practically nothing changed. At some point, I came to the realization that things could not continue in the same way. To change, I set out in search of my why, my inner drive. What do I actually like to do and why? Unfortunately, all of the modern literature and videos about "finding your passion" couldn't really answer my question because it didn't help me find my why. In fact, the opposite happened.

I was frustrated because, according to the Gurus, I seemingly had no passion. Besides, there were almost no exercises at all; just a lot of hot air.

Today, I know that this so-called passion is not important to me because I have found my why and my inner drive. Interestingly, I can't compare that to passion, at least not in its traditional definition.

This is especially true in terms used to describe it, like the infamous "burn with passion". I also have an issue with Duden's definition of passion:

1. A state of mind that expresses itself in emotional behavior that is difficult to control by the mind (from which something is striven for, desired for, a goal pursued)

2. Expressing in strong feeling, in fierce, impetuous longing for possession, affection for a human being

3. Great enthusiasm, strong (pleasure-oriented) inclination, passion for something that you always try to acquire, for a certain activity that you dedicate yourself to

I like certain activities and things as much as the next person, but I don't follow them with constant devotion or burn for

them, which quite frankly sounds dange-
rous, especially in IT.

My why, on the other hand, drives me and
fills me, even without me being on fire for
it. It goes deeper than passion, straight to
the core of my very being. If my why is
consistent with my job, then I feel satis-
fied, relaxed, and calm.

I feel a state of satisfaction and not happi-
ness because the latter is only temporary.
However, the road to this satisfaction was
not always easy. I tried a lot of approaches
and made many detours until I finally
found my why. Now, I want to help you
find your why with the same exercises that
ultimately led to my success.
Buckle up and get ready to go on a jour-
ney to finding your why.

Introduction

Thanks for joining me and for your interest
in participating in these exercises. It has
helped pave the way to my success and I
really hope that it will do the same for you.
Now, I'll start off by saying that things
might get deep. I'll be talking about fee-
lings and the subconscious and it might be
challenging for some. I've been there. As a
rational thinker, delving into this put me in
somewhat unfamiliar territory.
However, I soon realized and accepted
that rational thinking comprises just a
small part of our brain. You may have
heard that saying, 'it's just the tip of the
iceberg'. This is exactly what our brains are
like. The tip, in this case, refers to the logi-
cal and rational part of the brain, while the
large mass below the water is our subcon-
scious.

While our rational tip is responsible for gi-
ving us insight and logic, our subconscious
becomes a vast and growing collection of
experiences and emotions, the latter
more than likely being tied to the former.
For example, if you fell off of your bike
when you were younger, you'll remember
the event itself as well as the emotions
that went along with it.
This ability of our brain to link experiences
and emotions is evident in everything that
we do.
Depending on what book you're reading,
our consciousness is between 3% and 5%
of our brain. The remaining 95+% is taken
up by our subconscious.
Routines, habits, beliefs and more all hap-
pen below the radar, and we are often not
even aware of it. When was the last time
you actively thought about brushing your
teeth? Try explaining it, I'll wait.

You can continue reading at mindfuldevma-
g.com/find-your-why

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