

When we're acting mindlessly, we often act on our feelings and do what we're emotionally pressured to do... rather than what's in our best interests.

When we're not being Mindful, when we're not thinking...we're just doing...and how we do some very regretful things!

People who are more mindless tend to have more problems in life than folks who are more Mindful...like legal problems, financial problems, drug and alcohol problems, broken relationships, lost jobs, etc.

9- Ruminare - (ru-men-ate) - to keep thinking about something over and over and over... It's when we "stew over" something...or when thoughts "churn through our mind." We just keep thinking about it and we DON'T Let It Go.

We can't allow ourselves to stew over or dwell on painful Emotion-Driven Thoughts! That just makes us sick.

Mindlessness causes problems when we respond to life WITHOUT being AWARE of the things we NEED to be aware of...and WITHOUT PAYING ATTENTION to what we REALLY NEED to be paying attention to! When we're CAUGHT UP in the Heat-of-the-Moment, we DON'T pay much attention to THE BIG PICTURE of what's going on OR we just attend to SOME PARTS of the situation...and NOT others. When we're UNDER THE INFLUENCE of an EMOTIONAL STATE (anger, anxiety, desire) or an ALTERED STATE OF MIND (high, drunk, spaced-out, manic, mindlessness), we do things WITHOUT THINKING MUCH about what we're doing...and we OFTEN end up doing some VERY PAINFUL THINGS!

Consider when we get messed up on drugs and alcohol and have a one-night stand with someone we WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN WITH had we been Mindful? Consider when we want to party so bad, we get ourselves in a dangerous situation...just so we can party. Consider when we get in a car wreck or have an on-the-job accident because we're angry and distracted by what made us angry. Consider when we spout off at work or in a social gathering and we say something we SHOULDN'T have said. Consider when we're totally aggravated and slap our child too hard or hit our romantic partner...or throw something we value? Consider when we're upset about something and we binge eat or wolf down a big bag of chips or cookies while we watch TV? Consider when we're in a manic state and we go shopping and spend more money than we have...with checks we cannot cover.

What types of emotional situations GET THE BEST OF YOU and lead to mindless reactions and painful consequences? _____

APPLICATION: When We Keep Hurting Ourselves...Mindlessly

When we're NOT IN CONTROL of what we pay attention to, sometimes, we LET OUR MIND RUN...and we ruminare. We keep thinking about the same things over and over...and very often, these are the things that HURT US THE MOST...AND KEEP US HURTING...MINDLESSLY.

What sort of things do you ruminare about that causes you to feel worse n' worse? Mention how long you typically dwell on such things...minutes, hours, days, weeks? _____

We've got to become Mindful of Painful Rumination and STOP ourselves! Else, we'll become more and more angry, more and more depressed, more and more hopeless, and, more and more likely to do something impulsive and desperate...like one of our favorite coping behaviors that'll end up causing a whole lot more pain and suffering.

Ever think about how our TODAY'S are burdened when we ruminate about YESTERDAY'S misdeeds and what might happen TOMORROW? Don't you think our TODAYS would be much better if we'd Let Go of our YESTERDAYS... and Follow Through with a Game Plan for a better TOMORROW instead?

Below are examples of PAINFUL RUMINATION...the type of rumination that often results in Self-Destructive, Emotion-Driven Behavior.

"Man, I've been pacing back and forth for over 30 minutes stewing over that idiot. I'm getting angrier and angrier by the minute. I'd like to rip his head right off his shoulders. How dare him. I'm gonna find a way to get even. Actually, I should find a way to hurt him twice as bad as he's hurt me. He's gonna pay BIG. I should call his girlfriend and tell her about his little office affair. That would really fix him! I could tell his boss what he says behind her back. That would be good, too! I could have his car towed. He's always parking where he shouldn't. I could..."

"I can't believe I said that. How could I be so stupid? What an idiot I made of myself. Everybody heard me. Why do I do such stupid things? Why don't I think before I say things? Why can't I do anything right? They're going to think I'm such a fool. I either say stupid things or do stupid things. And last week, I can't believe I said that. He looked at me like I was the biggest idiot. And what a fool I made of myself last month. I must be the stupidest person alive. Why am I even taking that class? I'll make a fool out of myself there, too. I'm so stupid, I don't deserve to be alive. I should just end it all right now. This is too painful. I'll never change. I'll ruin everything that's going good by being so stupid. I can't deal with this anymore."

Do you find yourself in these stories...or something like one of these stories? Explain.

How often do you respond to Painful Rumination in a self-destructive manner? What do you end up doing? _____

SKILL BUILDER: Turning On Mindfulness to Turn Off Mindless Rumination

Below are two examples of BECOMING MINDFUL of Painful Rumination. They show HOW TO TAKE CONTROL of Emotional Mind by TALKING OURSELVES THROUGH what could end up being a crisis situation.

"I've been sitting here FOR HOURS, smoking and drinking...beer after beer. The TV's on, but I couldn't say what's been on. I can't stop thinking about this. I can't get it off my mind. I've gone from angry to depressed to hopeless, and now, all I'm doing is thinking about ways to hurt them and kill myself. God, I'm getting more and more depressed by just sitting here. Why can't I let things go? Why do I let things get this bad? I can't do this for the rest of the night or I'm gonna end up doing something drastic. I've got to get control before I lose it. I've got to do something to stop this painful rumination. I've got to find a way to get out of this mood. The lady said to phone a friend, call your sponsor, call your pastor, go to an activity...or call 911 if it gets too bad. I'm not quite there yet, but close! I'll make some calls and see who's available. I can't do this to myself again. I've got to take control."

"I should NOT have watched that movie. I knew better. I can't get the memories of what happened to me off my mind now. I can't sleep thinking about it and I'm crying a lot again. I'm isolating again, too. These are my warning signs. I guess my depression is coming back. I've got to get out of the house and get this off my mind. I've got to do something to distract myself. I've gotta nip this in the bud before I totally relapse and my life falls apart...and I end up in the hospital again. I'll never watch that kind of movie again. God, what was I thinking?"

Sometimes we CHOOSE to pay attention to things that get us all stirred up...things that take away any calm or peace we might feel...things that create chaos in our day and our life. These things are NOT a priority in our life and we DON'T NEED to be involved in them.

The High Drama person lives a highly charged life filled with intense emotion and lots of emotional ups and downs.

We CHOOSE to get involved in things that are NOT our problems. They belong on someone else's "To Deal With" list!

We would NOT choose to be involved in these things if we were trying to limit the chaos, drama, and stress in our life!

Think about a recent period of Painful Rumination. Using the examples above, write a story. Show how you CATCH yourself in Painful Rumination and what you can say to Talk Yourself Out of Painful Rumination and into Life-Enhancing Coping Behavior. ____

APPLICATION: Mindlessly Allowing Ourselves to Get All Stirred Up

Some people become SUCKED INTO emotionally charged situations...mindlessly. Before they're aware of what's going on, they're in the middle of something upsetting and they've lost their peace. Some folks LOOK FOR emotionally charged situations to GET involved in. This is so common...the terms "HIGH DRAMA" and "DRAMA QUEEN" have become part of our language! These people LIVE IN Emotional Mind...they live, eat, and breathe Emotional Mind. They may CREATE situations or EXAGGERATE their emotional experiences for the sake of drama, excitement, and attention. They're quick to GET involved in other people's problems and the latest gossip and nasty rumors. They're quick to TAKE ON and FIGHT ANY battle, conflict, or injustice that Comes Their Way! THE MORE DRAMA, THE BETTER...FOR THEM!

Are you a Drama King or Queen? If so, what effect does all the drama have on your life? _____

What percent of your upsetting Emotional Mind time is related to things that DON'T BELONG in YOUR life...things that are NOT YOUR ISSUES...things YOU CHOOSE to be involved in that are NOT A PRIORITY in YOUR life? _____

10- We feel a sense of value, self-esteem, and mastery by helping others. It's easier to help other people with THEIR problems because we're not so emotionally involved. Having some emotional distance helps us to think rationally and to come up with some wise suggestions. It's funny how we're good at helping others...but when it comes to our own life, we feel helpless and we can't solve our own problems!

11- Ranting n' raving - fussing and throwing a fit.

12- Perceived injustice - something WE THINK is not fair or right. Like we believe a rule is unfair, but we don't understand the Big Picture of why the rule exists. We PERCEIVE it to be an injustice because it inconveniences us... but, it may save lives!

An opportunity to become upset and to act-out Came Our Way. We took advantage of it. We came upon a trigger situation on our Recovery Path. Instead of protecting our peace and stability, we CHOSE to get involved in drama that had nothing to do with the Big Picture of Our Life other than to upset it!

We CHOOSE to get involved in drama for many reasons. Some folks like to stir things up when life is calm and "boring." Chaos and drama is all they know and they don't feel comfortable without it. Some say drama makes them feel alive... that it fills the emptiness. Some take on other people's problems to distract themselves from their own pain and problems. Others believe the people and causes they're fighting for need them and wouldn't get along without them. This gives them a sense of value and purpose.¹⁰

If you're a DRAMA SEEKER, why do you think you CHOOSE to get involved in drama?

In the following sections, we'll look at some ways we mindlessly GET involved in upsetting things that take away our peace and stability. As you read each section (like "The Joiner"), MARK OR HIGHLIGHT PARTS that describe things you do.

The Joiner

A common hospital example of mindlessly becoming involved in a negative situation is when folks return to the unit after a day of therapies. They're feeling pretty good and hopeful about life and they're focused on recovery. They get to the unit and another patient is upset and ranting n' raving¹¹ about some perceived injustice¹² on the unit or with their treatment team.

What do you think happens when they walk into this high drama situation? _____

Many lose Mindfulness of THEIR recovery and turn their attention to the conflict and cause of the upset peer. They jump in the middle of it! They become upset, rant n' rave, and feed off the peers' emotions. The result, they lose their peace and stability and their focus on recovery. They become involved in conflict that's NOT a PRIORITY in THEIR life. This distracts them from their own life and recovery.

Are you a "Joiner"? Do you get involved in drama in this way? If so, explain. _____

The Fixer

Consider the "codependent" person who CHOOSES to become involved with people who have a lot of problems and drama in their life. They want to "fix" or help them. Instead of focusing on their OWN recovery or life, they mindlessly get involved in relationships and situations that are NOT life-enhancing or recovery-focused. They

13- Destabilizing (dee-stay-bill-eye-zing) - causing us to lose our stability and balance.
 14- Injustices - things that aren't fair or just.
 15- Absorbs - takes in. Like a sponge absorbs water, we absorb all their complaints!

Every time the phone rings... every time we're with them, we MINDLESSLY make a DECISION to dance with them. We carry out the same moves and behaviors. They say this...so we say that. They bring this up...so we respond with that. Then, they say this...so we say that...time after time. The same dance. The same moves. The same outcome... conflict, misery, and upset.

We have a role in it. We play the game. We dance with them. We allow ourselves to get involved in the same song and dance over and over. They're like a broken record that we allow to play over and over...and it's NOT music to our ears.

fill their time and apply their energy to destabilizing¹³ people and situations. This leads to depression, anger, unmet personal needs, and quite often...relapse.

Are you a "Fixer"? Do you CHOOSE relationships that BRING YOU DOWN and TAKE AWAY YOUR peace and stability...and YOUR focus on YOUR LIFE and recovery? If so, what types of people do you get involved with and how do they GET IN THE WAY of your life and recovery? _____

The Complainer's Ear

Think about the friend or family member who is "always" negative, angry, and critical of "everything." When you're around them, all it is...is whining, fussing, and moaning. All they talk about are the injustices¹⁴ of life and their problems...which of course are caused by everyone but them. If you were feeling pretty good and were focused on positive things, this person can "Turn your Mind" and put you in a depressed or angry mood quick, fast, and in a hurry!

Are you "The Complainer's Ear"? Are you the one who LISTENS TO and ABSORBS¹⁵ THEIR complaints? If so, who challenges YOUR POSITIVE MOOD by THEIR BAD MOOD? What happens to your peace and stability when you're around them? _____

The Dance Partner

This one comes up in almost every Group. It involves the awful phone calls or visits with family or ex-spouses. The visits may start off good, but they soon sour and are filled with great conflict and ugliness. The conversation turns to all our mistakes, how we've hurt others, all the things we're doing wrong, how we've made a mess of our life, and how we're irresponsible and will never grow up or take responsibility for our life. A big fight and great upset occurs almost every time we talk with them. We often lose our peace and stability and sometimes...our hopefulness...and our focus on recovery. It's the same conversation...the same topics over and over.

Do you have a relationship like this in your life? Is there someone who upsets you almost every time you talk or visit with them? If so, how does this affect your peace and stability? What does it make you feel like doing? _____