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By

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## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Review of Literature .....	4
Discussion.....	12
Conclusion .....	18
Works Cited .....	21

## Introduction

According to Thompson and Waltz, mindfulness can be described as a tendency towards maintaining the open, accepting, present focus of attention during day-to-day life without an attitude of judgement (Thompson n.p). The daily challenges we face are to slow down our thinking and stay present in our moment-to-moment experiences; this can be difficult as our life situations can take up a large percentage of our time as circumstances can appear to be out of our control, leaving us feeling stressed and exhausted. Learning to harness our physical, emotional, mental, and mindful energy through mindful practices offers a significant resource to recognize energy-depleting behaviours by taking responsibility to change them. The outcome recharges our energy system, increases our coping mechanisms, and improves wellbeing (Rodski 24-37). Life's values carry a more profound meaning as we make an essential shift in cultivating healthier, positive choices. Our hearts open with loving-kindness, patience, acceptance, inner peace, and goodwill for ourselves and the greater good of humanity. Dr Stan Rodski has over thirty years of expertise in the neuroscience approach to mindfulness; his research findings showed that the "patterns and repetitions in mindfulness activities such as colouring in encourages the brain to produce the more relaxed alpha wave", particularly when these activities are used to help people fall asleep or sleep more deeply (Rodski 50).

Practising these qualities increase physiological wellbeing opening our conscious awareness toward sensory impressions, perceptions, and emotional responses, deepening our relationship with the body's cellular memory, including bi-products of personal beliefs and social conditioning. When we become lost in our thoughts, entangled in social interactions, our ability to see clearly or communicate effectively is challenged (Gunaratana 25-27). Moving forward into life without a clear mind brings about imbalances to our wellbeing, affecting our stress

levels, emotional responses, pain, and suffering. There are no quick-fix approaches to alleviate our suffering; however, adapting and responding to our difficulties challenges us to rebuild and strengthen our resilience. Over time we gain more self-empathy and acceptance, helping to achieve a sound skilful 'footing' when our life becomes unbalanced through our unwanted difficulties and challenges (Linda Graham 24). Neff has identified the similarities between self-compassion and mindfulness; the findings have shown increased understanding and growth in both practices. Our sensitivity becomes heightened as we turn toward accepting our suffering; by staying with the distress, we become aware of experiencing painful feelings.

Self-compassion moves us from distress to nurturing ourselves, bringing more self-care into our lives. We feel less alone or isolated. We strengthen our ability to create healthier outcomes; our human nature is to share a deep inner desire to alleviate suffering and realize that we are not the only ones struggling with our imperfections. This vital connection is a combined link supporting our healing and wellbeing, lowering anxiety levels and depression. Over time we learn how "to respond to pressures and tragedies quickly and effectively" (Neff K.D. n.p). Advances in neuroscience have found that the innate capacity for resilience is carried in the brain and is hard-wired in by evolution. How well we respond to our life's experiences will affect our maturity and the functioning of the brain's neural circuitry; these patterns and responses to external events and internal thoughts can become fixed and deeply encoded into our neural circuitry from a young age (Graham et al. 24-26).

Susan Gillies Chapman examines the importance of mindful communication and its effects on ourselves, family, friends, and work colleagues. When we find ourselves in a stressful and challenging situation, our communication and interaction can diminish with others. Communicating with a "gentle mindful awareness allows us to be heard by encouraging us to

become better listeners via self-reflection and speaking with kindness and encouragement, offering insight and hope to ourselves and others to be accepted and understood without criticism or judgement (Chapman 81). Sai baba quotes, "Before you speak, ask yourself: is it kind, is it necessary, is it true, does it improve on the silence?" (Vahini np). Dr Masters has also taught us how to access the connection to our higher state of self-awareness: "The condition or state of our conscious mental attitude is critical, as it must be open and receptive to receive intuitive or creative guidance from our higher mind, which is opened by the process of deep mystical meditation" (Masters 7-8). Many professional authors have written books on this topic; however, one thing that remains consistent across disciplines is the need for connection to something higher than us: which they have referred as God, Spirit, Higher Self, Divine Energy, Psychic Energy, Universal Energy, Universal Law, or the Higher power. As we find ourselves trying to accept and deal with whatever life shares with us, our innate questions regarding our journey often prompt us to ask: "Who am I? What am I Where have I been?" and "Where am I going?" (D. P. Masters 2). The thesis aims to offer a clear difference between mindfulness and compassion and prove how they are both closely linked to providing individuals with the knowledge that provides individuals with a helpful way to develop emotional resilience and wellbeing by showing how blending mindfulness and self-compassion will support the physiological needs and bring a higher state of awareness and understanding into a person's life.

## Review of Literature

Research continues to evolve around understanding how mindfulness and self-compassion are intricately linked. Eastern Buddhism describes the foundations to embody mindfulness: through mental discipline, correct effort, view, concentration, engaging in the importance of our values and goodness with the right intention, we learn to initiate a skilful way to act wisely. By excluding all other thoughts and perceived ideals, we peel back the layers of our deep-rooted beliefs, attitudes, and ideas. The depth of the practice becomes self-observing and transformational, bringing clearer insight into the workings of our conscious and subconscious mind and how the mind interprets our experiences connecting us to our physical sensations that inform the body's life. Our ethical conduct benefits our self-sustaining lively hood and our ability to relieve suffering (S. Goenka n.p.).

Professor Paul Gilbert, a clinical psychologist, identified the benefits of mindful remembering as deepening our reflective awareness of our intention, attention, and acceptance by understanding our moral principles and responsibilities toward our behaviours and their effects on our way of life. Consequently, actioning a wholesome outcome to discern the positive and negative influences of cause and effect and our willingness to accept and recommit with mindful intention increases our awareness toward our attention. Through acceptance, we calm the mind, strengthening our focus through concentration. Our insight arises to self-examine our existence and our life's experiences. We acknowledge our human nature, remembering our past, present, and future thoughts, actions and ideals without harsh criticism or self-judgement, leading us to eventually delve deep into the roots of our conditioning, releasing the unhealthy thoughts of our mind. "When mindfulness is present, we abide more peacefully in our lives" (Goldstein 16,35).

Chapman identified how receptive and open we become when we feel emotionally safe and create barriers around ourselves when we experience fear; Facing our challenges can be overwhelming; our walls go up, and we find ourselves shutting down. Blocking the flow of Information and replacing it with our projections, we become challenged to remain open by bringing our intended focus to be still and present. It helps us observe and listen to our internal mind chatter and not act upon spontaneous thoughts that inhabit our freedom of expression. Hiding our inner fears make us more inflexible as we lose touch with the energy flow within our body, mind and heart, our muscles become contracted and stressed. Our thoughts and hearts become hardened, leaving us feeling isolated and not supported, making us emotionally hungry; we look to other people to rescue or entertain us.

We begin to manipulate others, hoping that they will fill our needs; when we realize that our manipulation strategies cannot be met, we become disillusioned by bringing suffering to ourselves and others. We find ourselves becoming isolated through our grief, our ability to communicate declines bringing our awareness to how we have stopped using our innate wisdom to share with others (Chapman 7). "Mindfulness teaches us how to hold steady when we feel hurt or disappointed, refrain from making matters worse" (Chapman 6,10). To make peace with ourselves and others brings a healthier outcome to soften our heart and heal our wounds; as we share in self-kindness, caring, forgiveness and accountability, our value of remembering increases as our self-respect grows with acceptance and encouragement, we gain more self-empathy and emotional resilience to cope with our stress and difficult life experiences, over time we take back our power from the all-consuming illusions that have controlled our mind, with precise, truthful precision heightening our spiritual awareness.



Goldstein has drawn upon the 'five spiritual facilities' that emerge from deepening our practice: emerging faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom bringing heightened spiritual awareness. Imagine for a moment that we have drawn a circular map a line down the middle; on one side, we have faith and wisdom for our devotion and comprehension. On the other side, we have concentration and energy for our exertion and calm recollection, and the middle line has mindful awareness that grounds balances and harmonizes these spiritual faculties. To believe that faith is a quality that we cannot see yet provides us with the gift of inspiration and hope as we plant the seeds of our future. Our mind settles as we experience more peace and trust for what we seed grows. "The faculty of Wisdom" is of the highest mortality and is held in three subject matters described as actual reality, the meaning of life, the conduct of life. To have the right intention and understanding by showing ethical conduct, correct speech, action, and livelihood bring the qualities of mindfulness and concentration into harmony with each other. The faculty of mindfulness brings a clear, insightful awareness of each experiencing moment's pleasant and unpleasant tones. The continuum of the practice effectively remedies carelessness from our lives as we learn to harmonize our experiences. The facility of energy brings us the motive force to move through the obstacles we face in our lives. As we choose not to run away from them or destroy them, we learn to move into and through them, bringing a mature outcome of self-discovery, awakening our newfound awareness through active exertion and calm, still recollection of our inner strengths.

The faculty of concentration is a moment-to-moment experience, bringing steady, focused intention to our mental state's rise and fall, an observation of witnessing our experiences we become much calmer and composed. By identifying the imbalances between faith and wisdom, we are reminded of how easily we can become attached to our personal views on life,

which affects our actions and shows how this dogma brings about the world view of suffering conflict and unrest. When we engage in the imbalance between excess effort and concentration, our actions lead us to become more restless and agitated, our attention becomes lethargic, and we feel unmotivated. To bring these spiritual faculties into our lives, we need to open ourselves to accepting and understand our imbalances. We can establish continuity and mindful concentration, which reshapes our thinking as we rise to the challenges that our life brings. We learn to be humble in our everyday lives, our self-confidence and trust develop further, our life values are more substantial, and we create a healthier emotional outcome. Our wellbeing improves our effort towards a higher vibration of attentive awareness, forgiveness, gratefulness, and focused concentration. We increase our self-efficiency and motivation toward our positive beliefs to make the necessary changes in our lives.

Our intuitive knowing to follow our spiritual calling by surrendering to the guidance of truth directs us towards our true purpose in life, creating inner balance and harmony, true happiness, and peace of body-mind, heart, and soul (Goldstein 15-35). In today's modern world, we face COVID 19 pandemic, creating unappreciated times; our emotional resilience is seriously challenged at the increase of social isolation and economic downturn. The rise of mental health problems, suicide, fear of dying, mood changes, depression, disturbed sleep patterns, and more unwelcome stress heightens the risks to our emotional, spiritual, and physical wellbeing. Our resilience is being tested as we face the unrest that has created further separation from our families, friends and community. We are being governed by a series of causes that have heightened our fears, anxiety, depression, grief and loss, affecting how our brain operates and reacts to our experiences" throughout our lives, the attitude we carry within us is stimulating responses both inwardly and outwardly" (Masters V1 5:35).

We are not immune enough to cope with unwelcome changes that throw us off balance when the unknown, stresses, and trauma arise in our life. So how do we cope? "We're born with sensitive receptors in our body, heart, and mind that keeps us tuned into the flow of energy and life going on around us and within us" (Chapman 7). The outer responses are those of others toward us, whether they are positive or negative. The inner reactions come from the unconscious mind that contains corresponding positive and negative thought patterns in the subconscious and from one actual reality and oneness with the Higher or God-Mind. Our attitude acts upon our thinking, following its positive or negative nature, as it interacts with the Universal Creative Process". (Masters VI:5:35). Our natural communication system continues to feed us thought Information, some positive and some negative challenging our ability to communicate effectively. We may find ourselves becoming closed down and defensive, cutting ourselves off from others. Mindful communication teaches us to gain wiser skills to express our emotions and manage our stressful reactions without causing harm to ourselves and others. Accepting all parts of who we were and who we are now strengthening self-acceptance, self-care, self-esteem, and empathy, expanding our conscious awareness to bring forth the desired response for creating a better life, one's daily attitude should be one of Positive Transcendence.

These skills build on our resilience as we learn a more effective way to deal with our adversities. Letting go of habits and beliefs that no longer serve our highest good. Creating healthy choices nourishes and growing us, forming stronger supportive relationships and connections to inner peace and stability toward difficulties and suffering that randomly enter our lives (Linda Graham). Seeing resilience as a comprehensive way to learn the best possible way to navigate through emotional turmoil strengthens our coping strategies, helping us face unexpected challenges, making them more accessible and more manageable in times of distress. We move

beyond sympathy, taking us into the realm of empathy for suffering touches us all. Throughout our lifetime, we come to realize that the experience of "pain and suffering are inherent to our human conditioning" (Graham et al. 24-26). Germer and Neff Identified the importance of understanding the similarities: between "self-compassion and mindfulness", it is essential to know "how they each relate" to our wellbeing and how to engage with a deeper awareness of where we hold our emotional experiences of suffering, sympathy, and empathy. The basic human facts of our life's experiences are challenging when we identify those things going wrong. We engage in self-criticism; we feel shame or failure somehow; our wellbeing is affected by stress-causing imbalances to our mental, physical, and emotional energies. "These emotions do not feel themselves", "thoughts do not observe themselves", "physical pain does not experience itself" (Germer and Neff np). Self-compassion is the most vital source available to us, bringing a spontaneous wish to alleviate our suffering. Engaging in learning specific skills and qualities will heighten our awareness and enrich our lives and see us in the world (Kristen D. Neff n.p). Neff explains the importance of connecting compassion, mindfulness, kindness, and shared humanity into our lives, bringing comfort and self-care to ourselves and others: "We are all in this together" (Neff et al. 61).

The first component, mindfulness versus over-identification, is when we are faced with adversity and pain. It is essential to surrender to opening our heart to the suffering; to accept that pain is unavoidable; through acceptance and surrender. We learn to be with the pain; instead of overidentifying and becoming caught up with our passing thoughts and story otherwise, we cannot embrace suffering as being held in the arms of compassion. We learn to treat ourselves and others with care, patience, and understanding; these qualities of compassion soften the heart to alleviate pain and motivate us to do something about it. The second component, self-kindness

versus self-judgement, involves care, support and soothing, just as you would support a friend who comes to you in distress. Actioning compassionate kindness to ourselves and others without harsh criticism, we recognize that perfection does not exist in our shared human experiences. Common humanity versus isolation allows us to see our experiences as part of the broader human experience, rather than believing we are separate and isolated; through common humanity, we experience the feeling of interconnectedness separating us from self-pity or pity for someone else (K. Neff n.p).

MRI studies confirm mindful compassion is an excellent positive trigger for neuroplastic changes in the brain". Improving and activating new pathways to our learning and creativity, thoughts, emotions, and mood, we reconnect more deeply with our body-minds cellular memory, reduce disease risks, aid in pain management, and regulate emotional control (Rodski 63,66). Further studies from neuroscientists have found the region of the brain called the Insula has been a neglected area on the functional studies and understanding of what it is like to be human. Continual exploration has found the vital structure acts as part of the multiple brain circuitry relaying information received by reading the physiological state of the entire body. "Information from the Insula is relayed to other structures within the brain that appear to be involved in decision making, especially the anterior cingulate and prefrontal cortices...The mind and the body are integrated into the Insula,". Providing insight "into the anatomy of human emotions" (Blakeslee. 1). MRI studies on the brain have found that the Insula lights up when people feel pain, anxiety, or anticipation toward the onset of grief. Our experiences can also engage with our compassionate, empathic self, an example; There is an old expression that goes, "Like attracts like." In studying the psychic function of the mind, we might say that "Like attracts like, first on a psychic level, which in turn results in a conscious attraction to certain individuals throughout

one's life" our "minds are like magnets attracting back" to us "the nature of our daily thoughts"  
(Masters V1:2:21,22).

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## Discussion

Although mindfulness meditation research began in the 1960s, it was not until the late 1970s that it was examined as an intervention to improve psychological health. Stress increases cortisol levels in the bloodstream, affecting our health, blood sugar levels, immune system suppression, digestive problems, heart disease, anxiety, depression, poor sleep, and weight gain. The application of mindfulness meditation as a form of behavioural intervention for clinical issues began with Jon Kabat-Zinn, which explored mindfulness meditation in treating patients now known as “Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction”. Based upon intensive mindfulness meditation, which has been used to treat chronic pain and stress, recent studies have shown, “Mindfulness meditation reduces cortisol levels in the blood, reducing stress and the risk of illnesses including mental disorders, peptic ulcers, and migraines. Then employ mindfulness meditation with conventional treatment” (Kabat-Zinn 144). More recently, research was done by The Shamatha Project at the University of California, Davis, suggested that focussing on our present helped in lowering the cortisol level. They noted that higher mindfulness resulted in lower cortisol levels. Mindfulness meditation shows a growing increase toward a greater public interest in accepting the practice, which has stirred scientific interest to examine the findings which have been called into question as small sample studies of experimental design have found the integral component of the spiritual system of mindfulness coined as “McMindfulness” (Nabodita Sarma, np). The teachings have been stripped of the ethics and the liberating aim of dissolving attachment to a false sense of self while enacting compassion for all other beings. Over time the values and teaching disciplines have become distorted and run the risk of merely becoming a tool of pursuing goals that in themselves are unhealthy. The findings concluded that

some researchers and practitioners overlooked the value system framework and cultural beliefs by implementing a neutral approach and a non-evaluation to mindfulness.

It is instructive that the mindfulness movement in schools and other learning organizations has become what Purser and Loy call 'McMindfulness programmers'—the instrumentalization of mindfulness as a technique to deliver a quick-fix approach: "The rush to secularise and commodify mindfulness into a marketable technique may be leading to an unfortunate denaturing of this ancient practice, which was intended for far more than helping executives become better focused and more productive" (Hyland). Another frequent misunderstanding is that mindfulness meditation should be done in solitude and on one's own time. Meditation and mindfulness are often promoted to individuals as an effective means of achieving personal fulfilment and finding relief from the hardships and tribulations of high-pressure business environments. Such an "individualistic and consumer orientation to the practice of mindfulness may be effective for self-preservation and self-advancement but is essentially impotent for mitigating the causes of collective and organizational distress" (Purser and Loy np).

Neff and Dahm research findings on the physiological process support the links between self-compassion, anxiety, and depression "suggests that Self-compassion de-activates the threat system associated with insecurely attached feelings, defensiveness and autonomic arousal by activating the self-soothing system related to feelings of secure attachment, safety and the oxytocin-opiate system" (Neff and Dahm 8). Instead of replacing bad feelings with good ones, happy emotions are created by accepting the negative ones we experience when practising self-compassion. As a result, it is probably predictable that self-compassion is linked with psychological qualities that are beneficial. For example, "self-compassion is associated with



emotional intelligence, wisdom, life satisfaction, and feelings of social connectedness—essential elements of a meaningful life (Neff and Dahm 8-9). Neff explains that self-compassion is the most significant and vital source available to us. Mindful meditation is a tried-and-true way to train the brain, effectively offering us the opportunity to accept the way things are; as we turn our attention inward, we acknowledge our suffering, including a spontaneous wish to alleviate the suffering (Neff).

Rodski found the effects of mindful intervention in physical terms to be a healthy outcome. Taking the cortisol levels out of the system encourages the release of dopamine and the resultant serotonin to relax the body. These are taken out of the system when we are stressed. The result of cortisol testing on mindfulness intervention has shown a change that influences these levels in the body. The cortisol level decreases when we feel less stressed, helping reduce fatigue and increasing coping skills; this ‘stress hormone’ is designed to help regulate our blood pressure and blood sugar levels and lower our pain sensitivity (Rodski 18,24-37). What does that do to our body? Releases neurotransmitters called adrenaline, which travels through the body's nerve cells and links up with other adrenaline neuron cells and together, they trigger a hormone release called cortisol. Once a person has dealt with the threat of the false alarm, our system begins to settle. “Your parasympathetic nervous system takes over once again. It discharges another neurotransmitter called dopamine to relax the system; the dopamine generally does that by releasing serotonin which then negates the cortisol in the system” (Rodski 18).

Because the human subconscious affects the neurological system, the conscious and matching subconscious attitude and idea accumulation become essential in health. Additionally, the nervous system impacts non-voluntary vital organs, glands, chemicals, and energy variables throughout the body. The more in-depth we engage in the practice, the more we enhance and

strengthen the connection between our hearts and mind. We are increasing our attention, creativity, improving memory, regulating emotions, concentration, and learning. We become more flexible and positive toward our daily circumstances and events, demonstrating the ability to make positive life choices, enhancing the true path of our hearts. People that meditate show more emotional control over processing pain and emotions; self-compassionate people have more resilience when coping with stress, health concerns, failed relationships, academic failure, trauma by displaying greater importance to their life satisfaction.

The researchers looked at the relationships that exist between spirituality and resilience. With the use of in-depth interviews, we were able to uncover the relationship between spirituality and strength and the role that spirituality plays in coping with adversity and suffering. There was a deductive research analysis done on the 46 interviews that were conducted. The use of spirituality as a tool to develop and sustain resilience in late life was discovered in five essential areas: “reliance on relationships, spiritual transformation, spiritual coping, power of belief, and commitment to spiritual values and practices. Results are presented as an interpretation of the participants' perceptions of their spirituality and indicate their reliance on spirituality to overcome hardship” (Manning np).

The mind-body, spirit connection is real and supported by scientific evidence. Dr Masters has developed metaphysical teachings on the practice of mysticism involving mindful meditation practices. The experiences result in “direct contact with a higher power known as our spiritual essence” our higher state of awareness increases the protection of our wellbeing as we age. Mindfulness is a lifelong journey; it is not about the arrival of a destination; the gift lies with the journey itself to open, loving arms and welcome the imperfect parts of ourselves with acceptance, love, kindness nonjudgement without any expectations on how we should be.

Myth: Meditation is the same as mindfulness

Fact: We do not need to meditate to practise mindful awareness; being present in our daily activities and noticing our experiences without judgment brings long term benefits.

Myth: Mindfulness changes our thoughts or feelings

Fact: Mindfulness offers us the opportunity to accept our thoughts and feelings rather than believing the practice changes our thoughts and feelings; with self-acceptance, we can begin to see things differently.

Myth: To practice mindfulness, we always need to stay fully present

Fact: Considering our minds are wired to be on the lookout continually, we can't turn off our mind; however, mindfulness is about noticing when our thoughts begin to spiral into worrying concerns. Becoming more aware of those thoughts assisting us in bringing ourselves back to the present moment.

Myth: Compassion has been interpreted as being a form of self-pity

Fact: To understand that most of us can show compassion toward others who are suffering is not as challenging as being self-compassionate; actioning self-compassion is often labelled as a form of self-pity. The truth in the matter is Practising self-kindness allows us to be with the bad stuff accepting our bad feelings and experiences with kindness, rather than believing that we are feeling sorry for ourselves.

Myth: Self-compassion is selfish.

Fact: How often do we as caregivers offer our love and understanding to our children, families, friends, and how often do we have a feeling of guilt and or selfishness when we need to care for ourselves.

Self-compassion is something that we may not be too good at; we learn throughout our lifetime. We practise self-compassion to feel better, helping us reduce our stress when we are empty, run-down, or unable to function. Filling our cups with self-love, kindness and acceptance of our human nature helps us cultivate a kind, forgiving attitude that allows us to identify ways to increase healthier behaviours and improved health.

Myth: Self-Compassion will undermine our motivation

Fact: Research clearly shows that self-compassion is a far more effective force for personal motivation than self-punishment.

Myth: Resilient People don't have bad days

Fact: Emotional resilience strengthens our coping skills when we face our life's adversities head-on. We seek not to run away from them or destroy them; we move into and through these adversities to actively problem solve by seeking support and asking for help when we are struggling.

How we respond to our adversities is essential; some can show up as a loss of identity, loneliness, regret, or negativity. Dr Masters teachings show a proven Affirmative self-programming meditation called 'Spiritual Mind Treatment' specifically designed to eliminate negative thought patterns within the conscious mind, through sublimation by the Higher Mind, or God-Mind within oneself' (D. P. Masters, Spiritual Mind Treatment Chapter 11 69,73). Reaching out to supportive solid communities with available emotional and material resources

can help us move forward with renewed faith and hope into the future. To live your life unconsciously aware is not healthy often circumstances push us into the journey of self-discovery to embody our authentic identity. “These benefits are not limited to a set of specific spiritual practices, spiritual traditions, or religious affiliations. Remember, spiritual wellbeing is about understanding your innermost self and your precise set of beliefs, including the association of better overall physical health and physical wellness” (Sylvain np).

### **Conclusion**

It is exciting to see mindfulness and compassion expanding globally. Many practitioners have formed global community hubs, and scientific research has uncovered positive benefits and effects on our desired physiological wellbeing connecting us to our physical, mental: spiritual and emotional health and happiness. Over the years, I have realized and accepted the true essence of being consciously awake and aware can be a painful and challenging process. To remain open to experiencing the opportunities for spiritual growth through transformation is an essential domain of higher states of awareness. This spirituality emerges concerning how one negotiates adversity as we move through our lives; we reflect on our abilities to cope with hardship, remain open through growth and expansion, and see problems as possibilities.

I can remember hearing the regretful phrases in my mind; if only I knew what I know now how different my life would have been! Ignorance is Bliss! I can remember feeling lost; I didn't know who I was; I often asked myself, " Who am I? As I no longer felt connected to specific roles in my life, I thought that I was the only one going through these changes and who would understand what I was experiencing? The identity of my possessions and my environment appeared foreign. I felt as though I was about to ride through the eye of the storm adrift on the ocean, unable to see the shoreline. I had no other option but to surrender and let go, a sense of

excitement and absolute fear. Over time I tried to find a new identity none would sustain me. I realized that the loss of identity takes us through self-discovery, becoming more consciously aware as we deepen our authenticity on this spiritual journey.

It was a lonely time for me. I had family and friends around me, yet I still felt alone as I continued to let go of my old identity and began to discover my true self. I found the loneliness was something I had to deal with as no one else could walk the path for me.

The key is to deepen our gratitude, forgiveness, acceptance, meaning and compassion, into our lives to reach out to family, friends, or social community sectors that help strengthen resilience. Setting up some individual realistic planning can reinforce and help achieve a stronger focus on our chosen direction. Improving Self-esteem with a stronger positive self will increase confidence reducing the feelings of helplessness when facing life's adversities. Learning better coping skills to problem solve helps empower us to move through adversity and deal with hardship. Improving our communication skills by communicating our needs clearly when we need help as we remember reaching out for help is not a sign of weakness; it is a sign of strength to act. Improving emotional regulation by seeking help if needed to work through the ability to manage overwhelming emotions helps us maintain clearer thoughts on overcoming the challenges we face. Spiritual wellness is more about relationships than yourself, although your relationship is at the centre of spiritual health. It is the awareness that your connections to the Universe serve a greater purpose than your reality. The spiritual element of wellness is about living your life with authenticity and your heart's true path. Graham and Hanson also assert that "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that stays. It is the one that is the most adaptive to change (Graham and Hanson 77).

I needed to know: “Who am I?”, “What am I?”, “Where have I been?” and, “Where am I going?”

(D. P. Masters 2).



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