

“Mindfulness teaches us
the nature of the shadow.
Heartfulness teaches us
the nature of light.
Without these
two qualities,
we will evolve either
eyeless in the darkness
or blinded by the light.”

Embracing the Beloved
Stephen and Ondrea Levine



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Our mystics are reminding us that both Mindfulness and Heartfulness are needed to make our way through this world of ever shifting darkness and light. Remembering that our brains are neurologically wired to automatically move away from pain (which we associate with darkness) and to automatically move towards pleasure (which we associate with light), you can see that without awareness and presence, we are trapped by an automatic biological and neurological reaction. There is no concern in this kind of automatic movement with discovering the true nature of either darkness or light. It is simply an instinctual response.

Adding in the quality of Mindfulness allows us to generate a different category of movement – a movement *toward* the joy of Presence and investigation into the depth of things and *away* from the pain and suffering of living on the surface of things. Heartfulness allows us to open, relax, perceive, and receive what Hafiz, the 13th century Sufi poet calls, the “Cruel Beauty of time and space”. Heartfulness frees us to shift away from moving toward exclusion and away from inclusion toward embracing what is and moving away from demanding that life be different than what it is moment to moment. These different kinds of movement are essential to making life more workable and ourselves more available to Presence and Peace.

Mindfulness is often defined in different ways – as watchful, observant, aware, alert, careful, attentive, conscious, awake, etc.. However you think of Mindfulness, the actual *experience* of this mental factor evokes responsiveness, discernment, and the ability to perceive the deeper nature of things.

Heartfulness is often defined as spirit, compassion, empathy, sensitivity, kindness, tenderness, affection, concern, caring, etc. Yet, the experience of Heartfulness takes you to the center or the core of both light and dark – and it is there that you find the mystery, the stillness, the peace that passes all understanding and lives beyond the capacity of any words to describe.

So whatever your definition of Mindfulness and Heartfulness, begin to look for the experience of moving beyond the surface and the appearance of things. Try opening to the experience of finding the light behind the dark, and the dark behind the light, and what will emerge is the stillness within the movement, and the silence behind the sound. Give it a try and trust your own findings.