

Revitalizing  
Relationships!

# SOLUTIONS

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Winter 2008

## Mindfulness in Relationships

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*“The same thing is happening again with my partner. I am longing for connection, he is pulling away. I am hoping for a chance to discuss it. I am getting the cold shoulder. This makes me angry and frustrated. I feel like a nag, and that makes me hate myself. This seems to always happen. What am I doing wrong? What is he doing wrong?”*

Painful relationship cycles become all the more excruciating when we realize that we have repeated them again and again, maybe with the same person, maybe with every person. We hope to change our partners or our parents or children. We sometimes think we have succeeded, but then we come back to the same place. We come to counseling and to our pastors seeking solutions. What are we doing wrong?

Mindfulness is a 2500 year old method of calming the mind and gaining insight into dysfunctional habitual patterns. It has been practiced in both the Eastern and Western spiritual traditions. In the East, it is called meditation or mindfulness practice. In the West, it is often called centering prayer. Therapists also use it in sessions to help clients recognize what parts of themselves continue to get hooked in difficult cycles.

Beginners can easily practice mindfulness in four steps: *mindfulness of body, speech, mind and phenomena*. All that is required is a willingness to turn inward for a few minutes. Right

now, you cannot change your partner. Just for now, be willing to be with yourself.

### Mindfulness of Body

While you are agonizing about a relationship, pay attention to your body. What is tensing? What is burning? Perhaps you have not touched or held your partner in a long time. Perhaps you are so angry with them that you stiffen up whenever they come near you. Just notice this. Notice if your sensations change as you simply focus on your breath. Don't try to change them, just be with whatever is arising.

### Mindfulness of Speech

We often find ourselves saying things to loved ones that we do not mean and later regret. Sometimes they say hurtful things to us and the same fights take place over and over again. Mindfulness of speech is a commitment to do no harm to others through our words. This includes harsh words, gossip, and slander. Oftentimes, when we feel our communication is blocked with a partner, we turn to oth-

ers for support. Unfortunately, this often leads to an increase in disconnection with the original person as fewer things can be shared openly and the chasm grows. When you are in conflict with someone, notice what you do with your speech. Even if we are very angry with our partner, we can choose

*Continues on Page 2*

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**Workshop Series**  
**See Inside for details!**

Positive Parenting  
Creative Solutions for Common  
Behavior Problems  
Part I - March 1  
Part II - March 8

The Tipping Point: Getting  
Couples Back in Balance  
April 26

Are Men Really from Mars  
and Women From Venus?  
Building Partnerships  
in Marriage.  
April 29

# Mindfulness in Relationships

*continued from cover*

to express our feelings with mindfulness.

## Mindfulness of Mind

In Buddhist thought, there are five root negative emotions: passion, aggression, ignorance, pride and jealousy. The truth is, all of us have these intense feelings and they never really go away, no matter how mindful or spiritual we become. We are human beings. Feelings are part of our aliveness. It is not a problem to feel them. The only problem is when we believe that they are real and permanent. "I am just an angry person," we say. Or, "I have a problem with jealousy." Or, "he is just so arrogant, I can never get through to him."

Working with the mindfulness of mind, when we feel these feelings arise, we must notice how we label them and "box" them into solid, unchanging things. Usually, we do this because we are afraid of our feelings and

want some way to get a handle on them. The more we sit with ourselves (and this may take some practice in meditation or some time in therapy), the more we begin to notice how the feelings arise in our minds, how they abide, and how they depart of their own accord. This does not mean we deny reality. Rather, we notice what is happening, allow it to be there, but do not hold on to it. Emotion is in motion. We don't have to worry about moving it along faster or getting rid of our feelings. They will shift by themselves if we can only relax.

## Mindfulness of Phenomena

Mindfulness of phenomena is offering that same open, nonjudgmental awareness we have applied to our sensations and feelings to the raw data we receive from the world, and particularly from our relationships. When we apply the above practices to our marriages or families, the results can be tremendously empowering. We find that we

don't react in the same helpless way every time our partner says that critical thing. We feel it, we notice it, and we respond mindfully. What begins to happen then is a tremendous settling of ourselves within relationship. Because we are not afraid of our own feelings, we do not respond with our usual anxiety and desperate need to change our partner's reaction in order for us to feel better. This cannot but change the relationship, as our partners notice that we have changed our part in the couple dance. As Murray Bowen would call it, we are differentiating, or responding with decreased anxiety in close relationships.

The potential result of this is peace—on an inner and outer level. With just a few minutes of being quiet with ourselves, we can for a moment stop the endless cycle of repeated reactivity to others, and of them to us. Deepening this practice and making it a regular habit can alter the trajectory of a partnership for decades to come. ☺



*You are Invited to Samaritan Counseling Center's  
Open House and Annual Dinner*

*See how your generous contributions  
have improved the Center!  
Tuesday, March 11, 2008*

*Open House • 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.  
Samaritan Counseling Center,  
220 N. Ballston Ave, Scotia  
Wine and Cheese • Tour Our New Offices*

*Followed by*

*Dinner • 6:30 p.m.  
Presentation and Annual Report by Dr. David Olsen  
Glen Sanders Mansion, 1 Glen Avenue, Scotia  
Glen Sanders Mansion,  
1 Glen Avenue, Scotia  
**Cost is \$25 per person**  
Please call (518) 374-3514 to RSVP*

# Mindfulness

Oona Edmands, LMSW, EMDR II  
Staff Psychotherapist

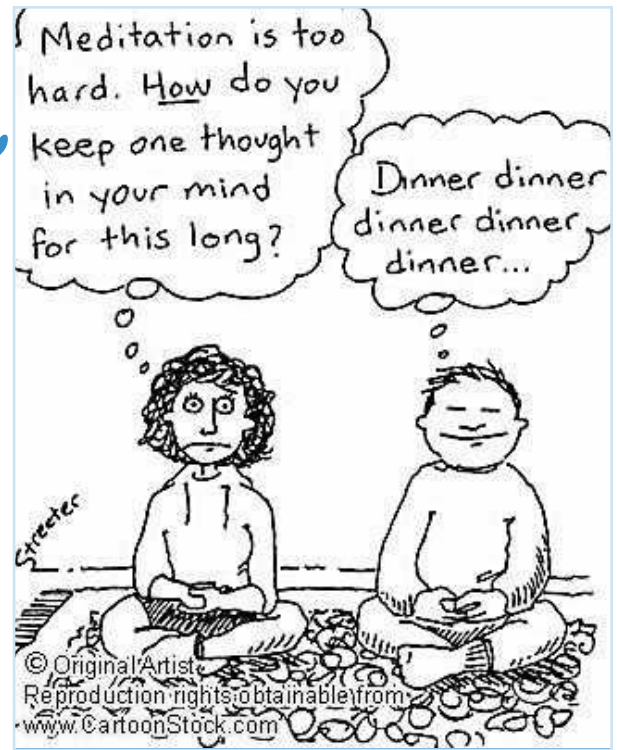
The holidays are over. The New Year has begun. Before you speed on to the next activity, take a moment to just breathe. Check in with yourself. Let your mind quiet down. Notice how your breath feels, where it is. Is it fast and shallow? Is it high in your chest or low in your belly? Let your mind rest on your breath. Don't try to control it or make it different, just notice how it feels.

As you rest with the breath, notice where your mind moves. Are you making mental lists of everything that needs to get done? Are you ruminating about a difficult family interaction that happened over the holidays? Just notice these thoughts, acknowledge them, and come back to your experience of the breath. There will be

plenty of time to think about them later. Right now, just give yourself a chance to rest.

Mindfulness meditation is a 2,500 year old technique for quieting the mind and awakening to the peacefulness of the present moment. Currently, it is practiced in many spiritual traditions as a means for opening your mind to the small, still voice of truth within us. It is also used in health care clinics to reduce stress associated with chronic illness, and is even taught in corporations and national sports teams (like the L.A. Lakers) to improve peak performance.

The Samaritan Counseling Center will offer mindfulness classes this year. Please contact the office at (518) 374-3514 for more information. 🧘



## Staff Update

Alyson Brener has recently joined Samaritan's Staff as a Psychotherapy Resident. Previously she participated in our Internship program.



## Upcoming Events

For information about any event visit [www.samaritancounselingcenter.org](http://www.samaritancounselingcenter.org)

### March

#### Positive Parenting Part 1

Saturday, March 1st, 10 AM - Noon  
Jonesville United Methodist Church

#### Positive Parenting Part 2

Saturday, March 8, 10 AM - Noon  
Jonesville United Methodist Church

#### Samaritan Counseling Center Open House and Annual Dinner

Tuesday, March 11, 5:30 - 6:30 PM  
Glen Sanders Mansion, Scotia, NY

### April

#### Leadership Style and Personality A Workshop for Clergy

Wednesday, April 9th, 9 AM - Noon  
First Reformed Church of Scotia

**The Tipping Point:  
Getting Couples Back in Balance**  
Saturday, April 26, 4 PM - 6 PM  
Seventh Day Adventist Church,  
Schenectady

#### Are Men Really from Mars and Women from Venus?

**Building Partnerships in Marriage**  
Tuesday, April 29, 7 PM - 9 PM  
Niskayuna Reformed Church

### May

#### Is Timothy's Law Enough?

w/ Guest Speaker Tom O'Clair  
Tuesday, May 6th, 5:30 - 7:30 PM  
Italian Community Center, Troy

#### More Than One Way to be Smart: Emotionally Intelligent Leadership

Wednesday, May 7, 9 AM - 1 PM  
Hamilton Union Presbyterian  
Church, Guilderland

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ORGANIZATION  
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Revitalizing Relationships  
Your invitation to the Annual Dinner is inside!

Samaritan Counseling Center  
of the Capital Region  
220 N. Ballston Ave., Scotia, NY 12302



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**Address Change? Duplicate Mailings?**

*If your address has changed or if you receive more than one copy of our newsletter, please alert our office at (518) 374-3514 so that we can streamline our database. Thank you!*

**Solutions** is published by Samaritan Counseling Center of the Capital Region, 220 North Ballston Ave., Scotia, NY 12302, (518) 374-3514, fax: (518) 374-9193, online at [www.samaritancounselingcenter.org](http://www.samaritancounselingcenter.org).

**Samaritan Services:** Individual, Couples, Family & Group Therapy, Educational Workshops, Professional/Organizational Consultation.

**Office Locations:** Schenectady/Scotia, Albany, Rensselaer, Clifton Park, Jonesville, Wilton. Please call the Scotia office at (518) 374-3514 to schedule an appointment. Financial statements for Samaritan Counseling Center of the Capital Region are available upon request through the New York State Attorney General's office.