

Concerns about McMindfulness

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Mindfulness is everywhere, from spiritual and medical facilities to workplace, military, prison, and school. While I am not against the fact that more people are becoming aware of the benefits of mindfulness, I am deeply concerned about some aspects of the proliferation.

One of the benefits of mindfulness is that practitioners can feel calm and focused. This certainly is something everyone can take advantage of. However, this can also be taken advantage of by people in power.

Now, we can imagine the following situations. There are employees who are being exploited by their directors and executives. There is military personnel who suffers from abuse and torture by their superiors. There are prisoners who are denied of the basic humanitarian needs by their guards and officers. There are students who are being unduly controlled by a rigid schedule and their narrow-minded teachers. People in such a situation could certainly benefit from mindfulness practice. However, it is also possible that mindfulness practice is introduced to or even forced upon these disadvantaged people by the people in power. The main but hidden motivation for the use of mindfulness can well be to tame their subordinates.

But without first understanding the underlying issues and their origin, just feeling calm and focused will not be the true solution. Furthermore, if mindfulness practice is forced, it could even be a traumatic experience or be a trigger for re-traumatization.

In my opinion, the people who need to practice mindfulness first are people in power. If they practice *genuine* mindfulness (not as a means to learn how to focus on making money or gaining a high status), which is always coupled with compassion and kindness, they would begin to understand the *real* situation where their subordinates are in and to take a responsible action on their side. Then, rather than forcing mindfulness practice on their subordinates, they may be able to focus on improving the whole system.