

## DISCO INFERNO: Mindfulness, It's Not What You Think

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"She's a very kinky girl... the kind you don't take home to mother." Funky music blaring, smiling faces, clapping, shouts of approval and encouragement being drowned out in my head by a voice saying "that looks cool... I hope I dance like that," "that looks stupid... make sure not to do that move," "what am I going to do when it's my turn," "that bitch she stole 'the robot' my signature move and now I can't use it," "ok, remember those five top dance moves so people see you as cool, sexy, fun, and real." Grooving down the conveyer belt a beat at a time, closer and closer, my turn to dance down the line is coming, anxiety building and building, mind chatter drowning out Super Freak, getting closer and closer, resisting and wanting, resisting putting myself in a place of judgement while simultaneously wanting to be accepted and approved of as I begin my dance down this hallway of "judging" eyes.

Swirling in my self-consciousness, waiting anxiously for my turn to dance down this people lined runway... no alcohol in sight to give me courage, to quiet the mind, to grease my aging joints. The pathway between the two lines of shoulder to shoulder people clears. My turn and off I go into an awkward, off rhythm, Frankensteinish collection of contrived movements that at some level has some resemblance of dancing. Not dancing to dance, but moving in a manner attempting to woo as much approval as possible from those judging eyes. Maybe the cool guy will give me a big smile with those perfect teeth of his and two thumbs up, maybe the beautiful woman I have a crush on will wink with desiring eyes, maybe everyone will be talking obsessively about how smooth and debonair I was, how I channeled John Travolta, how... "Oh, I hope so... I really hope so!!!" Moving, shaking, spinning in a mixture of self-doubt, self-judgment, while reading and interpreting each face that passes by, wanting it to continue, wanting it to end... And then it does and I find myself back at the beginning of the line of this shoulder to shoulder conveyer belt of dancing, mind chatter and longing for acceptance.

Grooving step by step back to take flight on the boogie runway, I find myself once again spinning round round like a record in mental chatter with my attention primarily being focused on my insatiable need for approval, the world of life is dancing by non-stop. Out of nowhere... It hits me like a ton of Brick Houses. I see it instantly with awe and clarity. I get it! I get it!! I finally fucking get it! I see it more clearly and in ways than I ever had before. I see "it"... I see my anxiety, monkeys screeching in my head, my persistent drive for other people's approval, my relentless habit of judging others and myself. The hidden costs of it becoming clear... clear in how all of this has been stealing from my life and the lives of others. A price that keeps me separate from others and not really living life.

What now? How do I tame these thoughts running like wild horses in my head? I shift my focus and intent. Giving 100% of my focus to life, to the other people dancing in their own beautiful awkwardness. Giving them what I had so desperately wanted myself... encouragement, approval, and a smack on the ass. With the strength that come with the hopes of liberation, I took the reigns of my attention focusing on the music, cherishing the others dancing, uncovering the beauty of the moment, and feeling more open and alive. I start really clapping and shouting woohos, I start

giving them the smile and two thumbs up, I give them the wink and hip bumps as they dance by. I start giving them everything that I had so desperately wanted from them. It was an amazing 15 seconds of presence for me before the judgement started crashing back in.

"Oh shit, oh shit... it's back. Boy that didn't last long. Man this is harder than I thought. What now?" This time I caught its trappings and refocused the reigns on these wild thoughts onto the music, the dancing, and again giving what I wanted. Back in the present and within another 10 seconds the voices came stampeding back in. Over and over and over again refocusing my attention with effort back on to the life happening right in front and within me. Like teaching a young miniature poodle on espresso to sit for the first time. So much work, so little discipline and lack of control I have had over my thoughts, and so much hope at the same time. Refocus, refocus, refocus my untamed mind as I moved closer and closer to my turn to dance.

Halfway through the line, it hit me, "Oh, shit... I have no idea what I am going to do when I get to the end. What will they think? What will I do? Oh, shit. Oh, no! Oh, my God... this is going to be amazing! This is going to be fucking amazing! I don't even know what I am going to do. This is going to be a huge surprise. I might look stupid, I might look amazing, I might be awkward, I might be funny, I might be all or none of these things, but at least it is going to be me, completely and authentically me. Not some concocted disco version of me that I created in my head. A version of me based on an egoic calculation of moves that would receive the highest level of acceptance, admiration, and approval of others so that I could end up higher on the food chain of popularity. At least this time I would be myself no matter what the costs or gains.

Moving closer and closer mixed emotions of fear, hope, and excitement moving through my body. Standing in the batter's box of the dance floor waiting on deck for my turn. Quieting my thoughts, focusing outside of myself as best as I could while becoming one with the rhythm as "Celebrate" starts blasting through the speakers and my veins. I look down at the line of waiting eyes as I close my own, dropping from my head down into my heart, down into my being, down into who I really am. Surrounded in darkness and music, I release Myself, my body starts moving on its own. Getting myself out of the way of Myself. So relaxing, so refreshing, so genuine... Eyes open and I step out into potentiality, surprise, risk, into life itself...

I honestly don't know what I did or didn't do during that dance, but I know it was Me... finally Me. The Me that is always there and wanting to rise up through the suffocating layers of self-preservation. It was so freeing, so relaxing, so flowing, so playful, so Me. I learned such an amazing lesson that day as I kept practicing being more present, giving people what I wanted, quieting the mind, and dropping into my heart and authenticity. I was so excited about this revelation, that I wanted to share it with the world. Later that day, I was talking with a wise friend of mine about this new found technology. This new way of being. I was so excited as I told him waiting for his approval and a high "wow factor" response. And from his lips matter of factly came these words, "Well, I'm really glad that you are starting to understand mindfulness." For a split second, I felt hurt by his words, until I caught the joke of it all and responded in laughter "Well, that's a good thing because I've been teaching mindfulness to others for over 15 years."

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