

**Work in Progress**

Published monthly by Michele Crawford

Work in Progress is an electronic newsletter intended to assist individuals seeking optimum well-being.

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Work in Progress January 2008 Volume III Issue I

Feature Article: Two models of transcending adversity: Mindfulness and Assertiveness Part One

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1) Note from Michele

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Dear Reader

There is a famous story about two prisoners sitting in their individual cells with different perspectives about their parallel situations. One prisoner narrows his focal point to the bars in his windows. Of course, this particular limited view makes a misery of his circumstances. His time is endlessly filled with lamenting and brooding and his body is overflowing with painful affect.

The other prisoner focuses on the sun and stars beyond the bars. Then his full experience of prison life is forever changed to his

advantage. Same state of affairs exists for both; but a very different viewpoint. The mind is a powerful thing and how you think will completely change your experience of reality.

While a lovely tribute to one man's ability to transcend his circumstances, it's another thing entirely to know how to live a life focused on the sun and stars.

Often, I have witnessed this vision within people in the very direst conditions in life, especially in Africa. Poverty, war, hardship, trauma... and often, they appear happy and carefree, grateful for the simplest things. So I know it is possible to transform adversity.

There are so many things that could be said on the subject of the best approach to difficulty. Here, I will discuss two effective practices that have the capacity to change the way you respond in moments when you are upset by either other people or events. Applying them can enhance your life.

The first is learning to practice being grounded and mindfulness (part one). The second is to become skilled with the assertiveness model (part two).

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## 2) Feature Article: Two models of transcending adversity: Mindfulness and Assertiveness Part One

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Our primitive ancestors, like all animals, were grounded and attentive to the moment. That is how you were designed to exist in a dangerous world. Just like a deer in the woods, you were wary of your senses, on alert for threat. It's a defensive survival tactic that human beings needed to adapt on a planet before tarmac and cars, tall buildings, television and computers, and most of all, speed and acquisition, robbed us of this ability.

However, being grounded is your natural mode. It is a state of calm and genuineness, which is the opposite of stress and chaotic existence.

By definition, being grounded is maintaining an awareness of your physical faculties. It is being watchful of both your body and senses: smell (the first and most influential, closely connected to mood and evoking memory); sight; sound; taste and touch (not just your finger

tips but also all along your skin). It is a return to the inborn system of your body's engineering.

Being mindful is to be present in and not out of the current moment: not stewing about the past, worrying about the future, brooding about past or future deeds or people, speculating about what others are thinking, ruminating and stewing, etc.).

To-day, healers describe most peoples' energy spinning overhead or outside versus being anchored within your bodies as intended. On a continuum, examples of not being grounded range from eating food while not tasting it; looking at a speaker but thinking of other things instead of listening; daydreaming; driving badly; loss of concentration and short term memory; being inauthentic; lying; selfishness and immaturity; moodiness; addictions; crime; suicide; etc.

What follows is the Holy Grail of personal wellness. It may, at first glance, seem to be too simplistic or easy to be titled so energetically. Nevertheless, the steps of mindfulness have the power of transforming any experience and ultimately, all experience. The harder it is for you to remember to do it, the more evident it is that you are disconnected.

The process involves asking and reacting to two simple questions:

- 1) Am I in my body now? (Grounding)
- 2) Am I in this moment now? ( Mindfulness)

These questions are practiced and practiced until you follow them 200 times a day... by that time it's an automatic process and you do not need to practice any more. It does not involve either meditation or slowing down or stopping. They are intended to flow into your life as an innate and automatic part of your existence. Ask them while continuing with the details of your days.

- 1) Grounding: Am I in my body now?

Draw your attention into your physical self and track through your body, starting with feeling the ground (grass, carpet, pavement...) under your feet and move upwards through your body sensing every part. Become aware, for example, of the chair beneath your butt and behind your back, the air on your face, the texture of your clothing and so on. Notice your slow breathing.

Ask, and answer with attention and focus, about your senses. What am I smelling right now? What am I seeing? Is it actually registering on my mind? What am I hearing? Am I in fact, tasting this food? What do I feel at a particular spot on my skin?

Do these while you are sweeping the floor... the feel and sounds of the broom; or walking through a door or down the street... do you hear the wind in the trees and the birds? Or note the air on your face? Will you remember what you saw because you were in the moment recording the sights?

The more you do this, the more insights you will have for why it's so beneficial. You will discover that the sound of rain or the sight of a peony makes you happy. Simply using any sense in any moment, with restorative purpose, has the potential for you to rise above and feel contentment.

In my office, when a client achieves being grounded, I ask him or her how his or her life would be different if they could feel this way all the time. The answer is always the same. It would be a very good thing.

Then, I ask if he or she felt exactly this way, would they smoke a cigarette, or go gambling, or have an affair, or lie, or over-eat or feel miserable (or whatever his or her particular problem is)? Their answer is always the same... no.

## 2) Mindfulness: Am I in this moment now?

Not being aware of the present is described as sleep walking through life, living without intention, or existing unconsciously. Am I in this moment now? That means right here, right now. No where else. Only here.

Let's say you drive through a frightful storm and even though you are hours late, you are now safely home. Being mindful means you look around the room, smelling its scents, hearing the sounds, calming down, proud of your accomplishment. What you are not doing is reliving the drive home, or worse, imaging dreadful things that could have happened and repeatedly disturbing yourself.

Or let's say you have an upcoming surgery. If you live in the moment, you would enjoy your present life and not be consumed with worse-case scenarios about the future. You would be fully conscious of watering your plants, reading your book, sitting in your garden.

Or suppose you are speaking at a function and you presume to imagine other people's poor opinions of your performance. Living in the moment means you accept you cannot read other's minds and you become a wonderful self-companion.

Whether you are brushing your hair, cleaning your basement, eating a meal, walking your dog... your spirits will lift by being in the moment, especially if you invoke your senses. This is also true in moments of duress.

Stuck in rush hour traffic? Focus on being warm and dry, watching the rain running down the window, listening to the music on the radio, sensing the steering wheel under your fingers, noticing breathing in and out. Doing so can encourage your counting your blessings with a sense of gratitude even though the cars are still not moving.

The prisoner watching the stars could no doubt teach us all the benefits of being grounded and purposely mindful. How often have you walked, driven, run, biked by the beauty around us and it didn't occur to you to notice because you were busy planning tomorrow, regretting yesterday or even employing your inner critic?

Now you know how to change that experience with two simple questions. Am I in my body now? Am I in this moment now?

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3) About Michele  
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Michele Crawford is a therapist who assists individuals who are struggling with trauma, anxiety or depression. Her passion for her work remains embedded in being able to connect with you in your suffering, helping you find real solutions no matter how complex the issue may be.

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4) Counselling Services  
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Are you prepared to live with more happiness, optimism, confidence, self-worth and hope? If your answer is "yes," then your next step is to contact me for a free 20-minute phone consultation. We can then discuss how I might best help you resolve your problems of Trauma, Depression and Anxiety.

The benefits of counselling with Michele include: significantly reduced stress levels, an optimistic outlook in life, increased confidence and hope.

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**Pass It Along**

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