

# Mindfulness and the Hurricane of Our True Nature

BY SCOTT ROGERS



One of the impediments to practicing mindfulness is the persistent belief that practice is supposed to “feel good.” While mindfulness practice may foster a more relaxed state of mind and body, as previously explored in this series, feeling better is not the primary goal. It makes sense that we want to feel better when we are stressed, frustrated, worried, or feeling down. But it is important to reflect on, and understand, the larger picture, as it paves the way for the very benefits we seek, without practicing to obtain them.

In the August issue, we reflected on Rumi’s poem, “The Guest House,” as a reminder that as human beings we will continually be visited by guests, “every morning a new arrival—a joy, a meanness, a depression.” Rumi invites us to “treat each guest honorably,” and to “welcome and entertain them all.” Of course, our impulse is to not let them in—to not feel uncomfortable—and instead turn outward to fix, distract, or escape. But mindfulness offers us space around this impulse, bringing greater awareness to our inner experience. Rumi helps us deepen our understanding of the value of inclining the mind in this direction and today we look to the hurricane as a metaphor for why we might do so in the first place.

Emotions are much like the weather. Our mood may be calm, and then as quick as a cloud burst or lightning strike, turn agitated. We can feel sad and, after a good cry, feel relief. And at times, our mood can become intense, with thoughts, emotions, and body sensations churning, as in a hurricane. In the case of a real hurricane, such as Irma—an event we can all relate to—it may well be prudent to escape from the storm, finding a place of refuge. Within

*“For every aspect of the storm depends on the other; without the eye wall, there could be no eye.”*

the hurricane, the eye is recognized as just such a place. But, the eye does not stay put and, sooner or later, we are once again in the midst of tumult. And so we evacuate, or hunker down and hope for the best. Of course, this perspective views the hurricane as something “out there,” something that we can and should escape from.

But what if our inner experience is not something from which we need to escape? That doing so more or less defies reality—and that to focus on the eye is to forget our true nature. There are times when we experience agitation and frustration

in the body, much like the feeder bands of strong gusty winds and heavy rains. So too, thoughts arise that can be judgmental, pessimistic, and reactive, like the outflow of high-level clouds moving away from the hurricane, that intensify it. There are moments of intense emotion like anger and fear that are akin to the eye wall, the extreme conditions that form around the eye. And there are times we experience inner calm, much as is found within the eye of the storm.

As Rumi reminds us, we human beings know this experience all too well, and that to run from the unpleasantness that arises from time to time, is to run from ourselves, to deny our true nature. When practicing mindfulness—when sitting and noticing the arising of thoughts (outflow), feelings (eye wall), body sensations (feeder bands)—rather than seeking to escape or change this experience in search of the eye of calm, mindfulness invites us to stay put and notice the fluctuating and sometimes intense flow of our interior experience. And because we are not just one aspect of the

hurricane, but embody it all, there will be times when we also reside comfortably and at ease within the eye, knowing deep down that it is not the destination, but part of the experience. For every aspect of the storm depends on the other; without the eye wall, there could be no eye.

So, when you sit and practice mindfulness, be on the lookout for changing weather conditions. And like a meteorologist who knows the value of observing what arises, tracking it, and has great respect for its power and beauty, when you begin to experience the unpleasantness of agitating sensations, emotion, and thoughts, rather than turn from them, sit, observe and feel the storm, as it comes . . . and goes. And remember to breathe.

Visit [http://bit.ly/dcba\\_mind](http://bit.ly/dcba_mind) where you can listen to a newly recorded mindfulness exercise that draws upon the hurricane to help us settle in to practice.

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