

Building Character Through Mindfulness of Waiting

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to describe the importance of mindfulness in waiting to build characters. In general, waiting is a very boring job; therefore, in this paper, we describe how to make the mindfulness of waiting into something that builds character, such as being patient, respecting others and the environment, and creating positive things from the mindfulness of waiting. This study used a literature approach with data collection from several theoretical and empirical sources. This study found that waiting can provide many benefits to individuals who apply mindfulness while waiting. It can hone perceptions and skills meaningfully. Mindfulness can train patients and improve their decision-making skills. This means that a person's character can be awakened by waiting, because waiting can train patience, critical thinking, and improve decision-making skills.

Keywords: Character, Through the Mindfulness of Waiting

INTRODUCTION

'Time is money' is one of those phrases that are already very common to explain how important and valuable every second that passes in life. Based on this, many people use the time available for things that are considered important and valuable. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, time is defined as the part of existence measured in minutes, days, years, etc., or this process is considered a whole. Einstein, in his theory of relativity, stated that time is relative, in which time can expand or shrink relative to velocity. In theory, if a person can travel at the speed of light, time will come to a standstill and become trapped in eternity (Chochinov 2011). Einstein also recognized the similarities between the physical and psychological relativity of time. According to Buhusi (2009), different temporal contexts can provide different readings for the same physical interval. In other words, the rate at which time passes depends on the frame of reference.

Anyone who has witnessed death understands the relativity of the time. Every moment becomes increasingly precious as death draws nearer, while for others, time works at a normal pace, with indifference to time as usual. The perception of how quickly flies is due to many factors. Studies of positron emission tomography (TEP) and functional magnetic resonance imaging (FMRI) have shown that the perception of time and the

motion perception system overlap slightly in a shared biological space in the brain. Other studies have revealed that local hemispheric deficits in space perception correspond to deficits in time perception (Conway, 2016).

Common evidence suggests that time "slows down" and "accelerates" across contexts and that we are aware of time distortions (Conway, 2016). The perception of time will be noticeably shorter when there is a "manifestation of emotion". Stimuli that involve emotions can reduce the estimated time. Attention and distraction also been shown to play a role in the perception of time. Distraction shifts one's focus away from thinking about time, which can ultimately reduce the estimates of time duration. Fraisse (1963) proposed that whenever we turn our attention to time, it seems to pass more slowly (Pearce, 2020). In addition, there are consistent findings against perceptions of time that suggest that a person actively engaging in complex tasks tends to *underestimate* the actual time that has passed, whereas people who do nothing feel that time moves longer than it actually is. An example is when a person waits.

Waiting is a difficult activity to perform. According to Sweeny, PhD in *Speaking of Psychology* (podcast from the American Psychological Association), waiting combines two challenging states of mind. The first is the uncertainty of what is to come, and the second is the helplessness of uncertainty. In general, when a person is waiting for a certain period of time, anxiety and stress begin to appear, both due to feelings of vain and the uncertainty involved in the waiting situation itself. In addition, according to William James (1890), boredom arises whenever there is a relative emptiness of the content of a timeline, which makes us attentive to the passage of time itself.

There is a subjective *cost (disutility)* to wait that relates to different levels of waiting time for each individual. Individuals are aware of this *cost* during the waiting process (Osuna, 1985). The anticipation of this loss is the onset of anxiety, which can be considered an agent of psychological stress whose severity as a *stressor* depends on the duration of exposure to the situation.

Sweeny (2017) found that individuals tend to be ineffective in managing their distress while waiting, and research has revealed that many coping strategies people have while waiting (for example, managing expectations, distractions, taking precautions; Sweeny & Cavanaugh, 2012) are not effective at reducing distress and can even backfire, exacerbating the pressure at the time of waiting (Sweeny, Reynolds, Falkenstein, Andrews, & Dooley, 2016). Persistent and *distressing focus* on the past and future that occurs while waiting can encourage the emergence of anxiety and *preservative thinking*.

How we choose to engage with the world and how attentive it is can affect how individuals perceive the passage of time. If we are attentive and engaged with the same focus, awareness, and alertness as required in meditation, we may be able to feel a fuller and richer time. We can make waiting time an active event through *mindfulness*. Taking advantage of the waiting time to explore our patience capacity, feel the stability of calm, appreciate the moment, etc.. Waiting provides us with a perfect opportunity to practice *mindfulness*.

Mindfulness is the practice of directing one's attention to the present while adopting a non-judgmental perspective on experience (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Blanke, 2017). *Mindfulness* is the basic ability of a human being to be fully present, aware of where he is and what is being done, and not to be very reactive to what is happening around him. Through attention exercised in *mindfulness*, greater awareness, clarity, and acceptance of the current reality can be cultivated. This is consistent with the fact that life is revealed only at an instant. If the individual is not fully present for many of those moments, it may not only lose what is most valuable in its life but also fail to realize the richness and depth of our possible growth and transformation (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). Mindfulness refers to suspending judgment for a while, putting aside immediate goals for the future, and enjoying the present moment as it is from the desired. The objectives of this practice include an increase in metacognitive awareness, decrease in contemplation through a reduction in perseverance, and increase in attention through an increase in working memory (Davis, 2011). From the above presentation, the author describes how individuals manage their time so that waiting becomes valuable, thinks, and behaves positively.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study is designed using the literature study method, whose data source is based on secondary data from literature studies to collect the information needed to support the written study. The information obtained from the data collection was studied in depth and analyzed to gain a better understanding that I cannot interpret and infers *the mindfulness of waiting*. A literature study is a research methodology that aims to collect and take the quintessence of various sources and analyze the opinions of experts.

Data were collected by identifying sources related to libraries, articles, and other supporting documents as reference materials as well as data sources. After collecting and identifying the literature, it was read, studied, reproduced, and extracted from themes relevant to the writing made. Document sources that are used as data sources and

references are focused on articles or documents published in the last 10 years; however, if there are data or sources of information related to the relevant writing theme that have not changed, it will be expanded to the previous article or document. Systematic literature is a method to find theoretical and empirical references that are relevant to the theme of the problem set through books, journal articles, research reports, and websites on the Internet, to be reflected in articles that are in accordance with the formulation of the problem, with the aim of describing the importance of *mindfulness of waiting* in building character.

DISCUSSION

Mindfulness in waiting refers to the ability to wait without impatience. Circumstances that allow the individual to be patient and not want an outcome or event. When the individual *is mindful* while waiting, it can see life go on in an orderly manner, as it should. General acceptance, patience, and open-mindedness of individuals in waiting situations. There is no rush; let things flow and happen as they should. This does not mean that the individual does nothing but does something attentively and consciously when something needs to be done for himself and others.

Sitting is an important aspect of *mindfulness* and meditation (Pfeifer, 2020). However, based on a series of studies conducted by Wilson et al. 2014 (in Pfeifer, 2020), it was found that individuals do not enjoy but "just think" silently alone in a room. A 15-minute self-inflicted feeling seems so unpleasant that many people avoid it. Buttrick et al. (2018), repeat studies conducted by Wilson et al. also concluded that individuals prefer to busy themselves with activities, rather than simply thinking or distracting inwards during silence while sitting alone in a room. Research on perception of silence has generated insights into its positive effects on individuals. Silence is assessed to significantly improve relaxation and mood and alter the perception of time and orientation towards the present by controlling the influence of trait variables, such as impulsivity, mindfulness, daydreaming, and time perspectives. These findings empirically suggest that exposure to silence can be effective in therapeutic and educational contexts to improve relaxation and well-being. Another study revealed that after performing *mindfulness* meditation exercises while waiting, people reported fewer negative emotions compared to performing flow activities or doing nothing. (Rankin, 2021).

In addition, based on the results of previous studies, the researchers found that there was a change in the time spent by people who meditated. Individuals feel that time passes quickly during meditation compared with individuals who do not meditate. *Mindful* people

feel that time is faster on tasks with time. Volet, Fanget, and Dambrun observed an increase in sensitivity to time after *mindfulness* meditation training. There is an idea that *mindfulness* meditation can help focus attention on the awareness of the moment to the moment and that this attention can be directed internally (as in one's breathing) as well as externally. Moment-to-moment-moment awareness is expected to change the *sense of time* given the increased focus on '*here and now*'. This is especially true in the current era, which is an instantaneous culture waiting to be on the verge of extinction. Individuals choose to move quickly rather than wait. It has not yet been realized that learning to wait can build a character and improve decision-making skills. According to research conducted by the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, waiting can increase patience and patiently can help individuals think critically and make decisions intelligently. It was also found that when an individual waits, there is more value owing to the psychological process of self-perception. That is, when waiting for the individual to be at a high value, that is, to have more patients.

CONCLUSION

Waiting is a difficult task because it can generate a sense of anxiety and other negative emotions arising from uncertainty and feelings of wasting time. However, waiting can provide many benefits when individuals apply *mindfulness*. It can hone perceptions and skills meaningfully. Mindfulness can train patients and improve their decision-making skills. Thus, it can be concluded that a person's character can be awakened by waiting because waiting can train patience, critical thinking and improve decision-making skills.

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