

Lost in thought



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When we practice mindfulness, we expand our awareness of ourselves, writes **Fiona Hoban**

I recently met with a group of people who were about to embark on a six-week mindfulness wellbeing programme, facilitated by me. The origins of mindfulness are rooted in Buddhism, but it is increasingly popular in western cultures.

Mindfulness simply means awareness. It's a direct, intuitive knowing of what we are doing while we are doing it. Most of the time our attention is not where we intend it to be. Mindful awareness is about learning to pay attention, in the present moment and without judgement.

It's like training a muscle – training attention to be where you want it to be. Our attention is often hijacked by our thoughts and emotions, by our concerns for the future and our regrets and memories of the past. Through mindfulness we expand our awareness of ourselves and develop our ability to live in the now. This reduces our tendency to work on autopilot, allowing us to choose how we respond (rather than merely react). The meeting was informal and it gave me

a chance to ask the group what they hoped to get from the programme.

It was fairly typical stuff – how to improve the work-life balance, how to calm a busy mind, how to switch off from work, etc. I jotted down a few notes to prompt me later, because I wanted to ensure the programme would meet the group's stated expectations and needs. After the meeting, I took myself off to a local coffee shop for lunch. I flicked back through my notes and tried to figure out how best to structure the programme. Before I knew it, a waitress was at my table asking: "Are you finished here?"

"Yes," I replied, on autopilot. I looked in disbelief as she cleared away a cup, a plate, cutlery and a crumpled napkin. I could scarcely recall eating or drinking. My mind was too busy on other things. The irony of the situation was not lost on me – here I was planning a mindfulness programme that would show how to be present and in the now, whilst I mindlessly ate lunch.

Of course, in practical terms, planning and preparing is needed in our day-to-day living. The trick is to use our mind when necessary. What tends to happen is that our mind uses us and we invariably get caught up in an incessant stream of thinking – much of it repetitive, unhelpful and fearful.

And all of this happens as life (and lunch) passes us by. Eckhart Tolle, author of *The Power of Now*, sums it up nicely: "The human condition – lost in thought".

As I left the coffee shop I smiled because I realised that spotting the insanity breaks the insanity. An insight I will share with my group. **CL**

MY FARMING WEEK

Zoe Payne Cappanargid, Rathangan Co Kildare

“
There's
never
a dull
moment

From lambing to finishing, there's never a dull moment," says Zoe Payne, Cappanargid, Rathangan, Co Kildare.

Despite having such a keen interest and passion for farming, Zoe reveals she's not actually from an agricultural background. "I wasn't born and raised on a farm. My interest for agriculture came as a result of meeting John."

She now lives on the farm in Rathangan with her husband and son Rocky. Zoe's husband John spends most of his time with their 300 Texel ewes, while Zoe looks after the 16 purebred Texels and cattle on the farm.

"We both put in a lot of hard work to keep both enterprising running. The commercial flock largely



Zoe's son, two-year-old Rocky.

consists of Texel crosses." Zoe explained.

"We've been very busy on the farm for the past couple of months. We've 18 of the Texel crosses and one purebred still to lamb. Thankfully, we weren't hit by the schmallenberg virus. We were a little worried at the beginning but, overall,

lambing has been a great success."

"I love looking after the animals on the farm. It gives me a great sense of pride," Zoe says, crediting her husband for the huge amount of work he puts into the farm.

"We're a great team on the farm. It's great that we both get to work at something that we love."

John also works in Balingglass mart so Zoe looks

after the farm while he is away."

The couple's son, Rocky, is almost two-years-old and loves farming.

"It's Rocky's second year of lambing. He always out with us. It's great that he has such a big interest in all the animals. In my spare time I like to go to the gym, but I usually get enough exercise from lifting buckets of meal and running after the ewes in the field." **CL**

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