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The Mindful Researcher

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Integrating mindfulness practice into scholarship may better support and develop emerging scholars. This reflection describes how regular mindfulness practice supported reflexivity, mindful presence, flexible thought, and valuable insights during field research. Equanimity, non-grasping orientation, humility, patience, and clarity are important skills and abilities for novice researchers to develop and apply. Interweaving mindfulness practice with research activities supported these skills and abilities to navigate a new role as researcher.

Introduction

In our contemplative communities of scholarship and practice we discuss how and why integrating contemplative practice in higher education is important. Yet we have not comprehensively explored the ways in which contemplative practice can support and develop emerging scholars. This reflection discusses how regular mindful practice supported a new field researcher in two ways. First, regular mindfulness practice enhanced the integrity of the research. Second, regular mindfulness practice invited reflection and acceptance of a new and evolving identity as a field researcher.

Doctoral candidates assume new identities, behaviors, and values as they enter the role of researcher and a community of scholars (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). Like many doctoral candidates, I had completed required research courses, passed comprehensive exams, secured approvals, and was ready to become fully immersed in a field study to begin data collection. I drove through stunning landscapes on my way to what would become my home for the next several months. I had little understanding at this time of the complexities involved in field research.

I could not yet anticipate what it would feel like to enter school settings as a researcher. I had no notion of what I would experience during participant interviews that required attentiveness, insight, and the ability to sit with emotions and thoughts that arise while listening to another's experience. My love and interest in mindfulness and teacher growth led me to design an interpretive case study to describe K-12 teachers' experiences learning and using mindfulness practices. I expected to hear various stories related to practicing and applying mindfulness from the dedicated educators who participated in the study. I did not expect how this study would enhance my own understanding of mindfulness and support me as a new researcher. The words of Bentz and Shapiro (1998) from their book *Mindful Inquiry in Social Research* ring true, "Good research should contribute to your development as a mindful person and your development as an aware and reflective individual should be embodied in your research" (p. 5).

Regular mindfulness practice in the research field supported reflexivity, mindful presence, and valuable insights. These skills were important while navigating unfamiliar territory as a novice researcher. Reflexivity is a process of examining one's beliefs, judgements, and choices in research (Miles et al., 2014). In qualitative research we explore and make known to the reader our potential bias and check for researcher effects, including how the researcher may influence the field and how the research field influences the researcher (Miles et al., 2014). For example, my presence as a participant observer in group sessions influenced the research field and participating in the group sessions also influenced me as I integrated new mindfulness practices and reflected on my own understanding. Ideally, a field researcher remains as open and curious as possible. It is important in mindful inquiry to be able to "tolerate and integrate multiple perspectives" as well as remain aware of "individual and contextual bias" (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, pp. 6-7).

I also found mindful presence to be strengthened by regular contemplative practice. In practice we sit in observation, noticing thoughts, emotions, and sensations as they arise and over time sustain greater intentional presence and awareness in daily life (Yates, 2015). Strengthened present moment awareness encouraged active listening and ob-

serving details with open awareness. It also invited noticing internal thoughts and emotions that arose while moving through the research process. Other scholars have observed a link between mindfulness and methods of inquiry that utilize field research. Brown and Cordon (2009) note four areas of alignment between mindfulness and phenomenology: 1) present moment observations are central to the research process; 2) one must hold open attentiveness; 3) receiving data openly as it enters is more highly valued than immediately manipulating it with the mind; and 4) “presence can be cultivated through practice” (pp. 65-66). Ethnographic research invites researchers into experiential knowing and discovering meaning (Davis & Breede, 2015). The interpretive case study research design that I used aligns with these methods of inquiry in that it was exploratory, interpretive, and sought to understand and describe lived experiences as well as meaning made by participants (Lukenchuk, 2011). Mindful presence in field research is an essential skill.

At times I felt unprepared, mystified, and uncertain how to handle a particular situation. One day I sat with a young teacher who broke into tears as she discussed her frustrations with classroom life. I became a witness in that moment while her emotions unfolded, and I held space for her to process. I wondered afterward how one best navigates the role of researcher in these situations. Yet in the moment I was able to remain present and grounded. Another day I interviewed the only person of color in the study and attentively listened when she expressed that mindfulness felt like “a very white thing to do.” Initially, she was reluctant to share more. I sat in shared silence allowing her words to sink in and eventually replied, “Will you tell me more about that?” After another pause and a deep breath, she began to share thoughts about the privilege needed to enter a mindfulness training, the feeling of being the only person of color in the room, and examples from her life and the lives of others she knew. Such powerful words were spoken that day and they impacted me deeply as I continued to explore my own identity as a person, practitioner, and researcher. It is suggested that new scholars focus on an intention to learn and “Inquiry should contribute to the development of awareness and self-reflection” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 7). While writing the final chapters of the dissertation several months after this conversation, I knew

that I needed to include her message. Her experience might have been considered an outlier in qualitative data as she was the only one who commented on this topic, yet my heart and mind knew it was an important story to illuminate and add to the body of literature.

These and other valuable insights materialized during the research process. Insights during data analysis often appeared shortly after mindfulness practice rather than in the depths of concentration. These insights helped me recognize emerging patterns in the data, consider an alternative way to view the data, discern the next best step, allow contextual responsiveness, and engage in self-reflection. Over time I realized that it was most authentic for me to show up first as a present and caring individual rather than to focus on my performance as a researcher.

This article will describe how mindfulness practice was interwoven with field research, define contemplative and mindfulness practices, and explain how regular practice cultivated equanimity, non-grasping orientation, humility, patience, and clarity for a new researcher.

The Daily Rhythm of Practice and Research

Integrating regular mindfulness practice with the research schedule enhanced both research quality and exploration of researcher identity. I settled into a daily pattern that consisted of beginning the day with a contemplative practice, spending the morning transcribing an interview or reviewing research notes, completing a mindful movement practice and mid-day meditation, visiting a school site in the afternoon to attend a group session or interview a participant, and closing the day with another contemplative practice. I even began to practice mindfulness while traveling to and from sites.

Morning work included transcribing interviews, working with data, and writing. Reaching a point of mental fatigue, I utilized a mid-day mindful movement practice to intentionally stop thinking about the work, connect with the body, and drop into present moment awareness. I would often take a mindful walk and engage in silent observation. I resonated with the words written by one scholar who engaged in quiet walking during her sabbatical, "Silence, even in movement, creates space for the inner voice to emerge" (Costa, 2018, p. 66). I recall one day sitting on a

bench observing the landscape and a bright blue sky. I noticed white contrails from an airplane. Pausing, I considered how quickly my mind had labeled this image and posed a question, “If you did not know that was an airplane, how would you describe it?” My answer was a poetic description of colors and textures. I realized in that moment that this was exactly what needed to happen as I observed and described the data in my field notes; I needed to see and feel it as raw sensory data before introducing my conceptual understanding. Bhante Gunaratana (2015), Vipassana meditation teacher, notes that the concept of mindfulness originates from the term *sati*, a Pali word, and indicates an activity that words cannot adequately explain; mindfulness is a pure experience that is a presymbolic experience or an awareness before the rational mind attempts to identify it. There are insights here to ponder as they relate to scholarship. We bring our own meaning into the research field and filter data through our lens of experience and expectations. Although this process of making meaning is important, the invitation to sit with data and our own experiences, pause, and observe with open awareness can greatly strengthen interpretation of data and research integrity.

Regular contemplative practice cultivates equanimity, non-grasping orientation, humility, patience, and clarity (Zajonc, 2009). These attitudes and skills are foundational to effective field research. I utilize these topics to organize and discuss research experiences. First, however, it is important to define contemplative and mindfulness practice since both are referenced. My research study focused on educators learning and using mindfulness practices, yet my personal practice involved both mindfulness and contemplative practices.

Contemplative and Mindfulness Practice

Contemplative and mindfulness are terms that are sometimes used interchangeably in conversation, but not all agree they represent the same meaning. The term contemplative originates from the concept of “a place reserved or cut out for observance” and infers opportunity for introspection (Barbezat & Bush, 2014, p. 21). There exists a variety of forms of contemplation. The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society (2015) explains contemplative practices as follows:

Contemplative practices cultivate a critical, first-person focus, sometimes with direct experience as the object, while at other times concentrating on complex ideas or situations. Incorporated into daily life, they act as a reminder to connect to what we find most meaningful. Contemplative practices are practical, radical, and transformative, developing capacities for deep concentration and quieting the mind in the midst of the action and distraction that fills everyday life. This state of calm centeredness is an aid to exploration of meaning, purpose and values. Contemplative practices can help develop greater empathy and communication skills, improve focus and attention, reduce stress and enhance creativity, supporting a loving and compassionate approach to life.

A commonly used definition of mindfulness originates from Jon Kabat-Zinn, founder of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction. It defines mindfulness as, "Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and nonjudgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, as cited in Greenberg et al., 2012, p. 1). Mindfulness is also defined as "a receptive attention to and awareness of present events and experience" (Brown & Ryan, 2003, as cited in Brown et al., 2007, p. 212). Sharon Salzberg (2011), meditation and loving-kindness teacher, describes mindfulness as "both being aware of our present moment's experience, and relating to that experience without grasping, aversion or delusion" (p. 177). Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hahn's definition of mindfulness states, "Mindfulness is the energy of being aware and awake to the present moment. To be mindful is to be truly alive, present and at one with those around you and with what you are doing" (Plum Village Mindfulness Practice Center, 2014). Pema Chodron (1997), Tibetan Buddhist teacher, explains, "The ground of not causing harm is mindfulness, a sense of clear seeing with respect and compassion for what it is we see" (p. 32). The terms contemplative and mindfulness are defined in different ways, yet common elements include intentionality for present-moment awareness, focused attention, and open receptivity for what is being experienced as it arises.

I include both terms, contemplative and mindfulness, to describe my practices. My contemplative practices originate from the Bihar School and other yoga traditions. I also utilize Vipassana meditation and a variety of mindfulness practices. The mindfulness-based intervention that framed the setting for this study invited me to add new mindfulness practices to my daily routine. These mindfulness practices include observing the breath, body scan, mindful eating, sound meditation, metta or loving-kindness meditation, mindful walking, and Sight-Sound-Touch, a practice where one shifts attention among sight, sound, and body sensory awareness. Incorporating practices throughout each day and doubling my practice time while in the research field had a profound impact on me personally and professionally. Regular mindfulness practice strengthened my ability to sit with emotions and uncertainties as I navigated new relationships with participants as well as a new researcher role.

The Field Research Context

The interpretive case study that I had designed involved in-depth interactions with two cohorts of educators at different school districts who were completing an 8-week mindfulness-based intervention. Case study research is grounded in natural settings, situates the participants and researcher in context, and provides in-depth exploration of meaning (Creswell, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Miles et al., 2014; Stake, 1995; Travers, 2004; Yin, 2003). This type of field study requires flexibility and responsiveness during research planning, data collection, and analysis stages.

As a field researcher, I developed relationships with participants and facilitators. The line of researcher and participant can become blurred as we navigate shared spaces and co-construct meaning. Present moment awareness and the ability to identify how my experiences and actions might impact the research field, participants, and interpretation of data are important considerations. Flexibility of thought is required to navigate an ever-changing landscape.

Utilizing my research design, I captured evidence that regular mindfulness practice altered how participants described their professional work and relationships with self and others. Surprisingly, I also discov-

ered that I was developing a deepened understanding of mindfulness, greater mindful presence, and improved research skills.

Cultivating Skills and Abilities

Research work blended with mindfulness practice resulted in experiencing several concepts that Arthur Zajonc (2009) explored in his book *Meditation as Contemplative Inquiry*. I realized that these concepts aligned with specific field research skills. For the purposes of this paper, I have selected and grouped the following skills and abilities relevant to the researcher role to discuss: equanimity and non-grasping orientation, humility and patience, and clarity.

Equanimity and Non-Grasping Orientation

Reminding myself to practice equanimity and hold a light, non-grasping orientation were essential attitudes as a new field researcher. I needed to soften expectations early in the research process to allow the study to unfold organically. There had been uncertainty about adequate enrollment at one site and I had secured permission at two sites as a precautionary measure. Interestingly, days before the scheduled first cohort meeting at the original site, the enrollment stabilized, and I ended up working with two sites rather than the originally planned one site. Having two sites to draw from resulted in a reasonable number of participants and made the study much more interesting. Embracing this unexpected development enhanced the study.

In field research we step into the context with people moving through a variety of life experiences. Sometimes I needed to observe my internal reactions to their comments and experiences. Sometimes I needed to observe my own emotions related to what was happening during the fall of 2016 leading up to and just after the U.S. presidential election. I had scheduled an interview with a participant the day after the election. I woke that morning and was experiencing shock. I chose a loving-kindness meditation and during the practice finally began to feel emotions surface. It was a felt experience in the heart region followed by a flow of tears. Witnessing my own emotions prepared me for what I would face later that day. I felt tension and fatigue in the school as I

made my way down the hallway later that afternoon. A teacher and I sat at a table near an open window listening to children as they were dismissed from the school day. I could see the strain on her face from a difficult day and asked the only question that seemed appropriate, “How are you?” Her story unfolded as many other participant stories from that day were shared over the next two weeks and I became a witness to how a historical event deeply impacts people. Participants discussed their own emotions, including the full spectrum from grief to joy, and how many students were upset and fearful. The teachers explained how they thought mindfulness helped them observe their own emotions and provide support for students. One teacher described how she realized that she could not change her students’ fears or life circumstances, yet she could be present with them. Their explanations echoed what I had also experienced. I could be present in the research field.

I found that my daily mindfulness practice was an anchor during uncertain times and invited deeper acceptance around what was unfolding and who I was in this context. I explored my desire to perform well as a researcher and my attachment to a specific plan. Contemplative teachers from many traditions provide guidance to approach each experience from a place of wonder, soften our attachment to judgement, lean into discomfort, and become comfortable with not knowing. Some years ago I adopted a motto, “Learning to be comfortably uncomfortable.” However, putting this intention into practice is not easy. Rick Hanson (2009) summarizes equanimity:

The word equanimity comes from Latin roots meaning “even” and “mind.” With equanimity, what passes through your mind is held with spaciousness so you stay even-keeled and aren’t thrown off balance. The ancient circuitry of the brain is continually driving you to react one way or another—and equanimity is your circuit breaker. Equanimity breaks the chain of suffering by separating the feeling tones of experience from the machinery of craving, neutralizing your reactions to those feeling tones. (p. 109)

Equanimity is lived as a steadiness of the mind or state of being calm during times of stress or difficulty. Increasing mindfulness practice while in the research field helped me sustain equanimity for longer periods of time and better navigate uncertainty. It also helped develop a non-grasping orientation. Accepting diverse participant experiences requires suspending judgment. Holding open awareness while collecting and analyzing qualitative data was useful. Regular mindfulness practice that invited suspending judgment and observing things as they are without seeking to change them strengthened equanimity.

Field observation notes require capturing many details. As a participant-observer, there is a tremendous amount of data to collect while also attempting to participate in group activities. Mindfulness practice sharpened my ability to focus on the present moment and observe details that I might have otherwise missed. I began to capture vivid descriptions in research notes while sitting in the parking lot before and after school visits in addition to descriptive notes during group sessions. These notes told a story of two very different school contexts, one set in a privileged neighborhood and the other in an urban context with struggles of poverty. I noted my own internal reactions to these two very different settings. As a participant observer there is an embodied experience that can occur as we immerse ourselves in a context and note our own sensory experiences (Davis & Breede, 2015). Detailed research notes about the context help researchers working with qualitative data construct context tables during data analysis and accurate descriptions while writing (Miles et al., 2014). I also noticed more details during participant interviews and learned to wait a little longer before asking the next question, sensing that they might have more to share. Interestingly, the educators I worked with in the study also reported observing more details in their daily work. Noticing details was a theme that arose from the data and mirrored my own direct experience. I not only heard what participants were saying, at times, I had experienced it myself. Yet I observed these experiences with awareness and equanimity.

Reflexivity is a continuous and conscious reflection throughout the research process (Miles et al., 2014). I became more honest with myself about potential bias, desires, beliefs, discomforts, and how the

existence of these might impact the research field. Practicing equanimity and non-grasping supported this work. In an effort for transparency, the researcher intentionally discloses assumptions and potential areas of bias (Miles et al., 2014). This process allows the researcher to “unravel how their biographies intersect with their interpretation of field experiences” (Finlay, 2003, p. 4). Examining my own tradition of contemplative practice, how I came to this work, and my experiences as a teacher were important to address throughout the research process. Additionally, having my own experience in sessions and with mindfulness practice needed to be separated from participant experiences. “The inquirer watches herself in the process, noticing the wake she makes as the boat moves forward or anchors for a while until a storm passes or the sun rises” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 57). Both regular mindfulness practice and continuous reflexivity throughout the study supported self-examination.

Observation is an important skill for field researchers. What we observe and how we capture data is fundamental in the data collection process. We look for patterns in the data and how we record and interpret observations is central to trustworthy field research. We have to separate what we want or hope to see in the data from what is actually there. This is a constant practice of non-grasping. Releasing expectations invited me to become more fully present with the participant experience. Not all participants embraced regular mindfulness practice and allowing each participant’s experience to simply be what it was invited deeper exploration of how and why some struggled to build practice into daily life. This data enriched the findings and recommendations.

During data analysis, I returned again and again to transcripts and other data sources to answer the questions, “Is it appropriate to make this statement? Did this emerge from the data?” Confirmability in field research assures that research findings are supported by the data and that we explore rival explanations and outliers (Miles et al., 2014). Dependability is defined as consistency between the data and the findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Letts et al., 2007; Merriam, 1998). Comfort with these research skills was supported by regular mindfulness practice and development of equanimity and non-grasping.

Humility and Patience

Moving through a doctoral program invites both humility and patience while navigating institutional processes, comprehensive exams, prospectus approval, and dissertation research. Similarly, a regular contemplative or mindfulness practice may both require and develop humility and patience. Cultivating humility is an important foundation for contemplative practice (Zajonc, 2009). I would argue that it is also an important foundation for scholarship. Through both activities, we realize that there is still much to learn and understand. Returning to an intentional mindfulness practice again and again deepens awareness of our nature and the shared and imperfect human experience. In turn, this develops both humility and greater patience with self, others, and situations.

Living with discomfort as a new field researcher was important to the integrity of the study. My many years of contemplative practice influenced choices around research design and questions. I truly wanted to better understand how others made meaning of mindfulness. I was grateful to have one qualitative research course in my program of study yet felt woefully underprepared in data collection and analysis techniques as I entered the research field. I also experienced discomfort within my role and identity as a novice researcher. As a participant observer in the study, I attended weekly sessions at both sites and visited the sites frequently. My participant observation in this study is best described as observer and participant (Merriam, 1998). In this model, the researcher is known to the group, yet the researcher exists in a “peripheral membership role,” the primary role is gathering information and “the information revealed is controlled by the group members being investigated” (Adler & Adler, 1994, as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 101). I was not a full member of the group, yet I was a member in the sessions and retreats at both sites. I also met with individual educators at schools and this often placed me in school hallways and classrooms. I was new to participants and attempted to develop trust. Yet there exists an understandable amount of wariness with a new person and researcher suddenly introduced to a site.

This situation creates a unique status for a field researcher as both an outsider and an insider. It is suggested in case study research that “observers should be relatively passive and unobtrusive” (Merriam, 1998;

Stake, 1995). This was attempted, although straddling the line of insider and outsider proved challenging. Questions around how much to share in whole group discussions and how my presence impacted the group arose. Navigating how best to respond to questions was a challenge in the field where I did not want to influence how the training would normally unfold. However, each person contributes to the collective knowledge in this type of setting. Humility was necessary to be an authentic participant and also an unobtrusive observer.

Although I entered this study with an extensive background as a yoga teacher and educator, I realized with the support of regular practice that there was still much to learn. I found that it became easier and more natural to be honest with myself and others. I began to enjoy being a student again and embracing the beginner's mind. It became less important to feel in control of every detail in the project and a willingness to allow the research process to unfold authentically took place.

Interestingly, a similar idea emerged at one of the research sites. Participants seemed to relax around goals and timelines, and they frequently noted a sense of increased patience with self, others, and an unfolding process. I, too, experienced greater patience and self-acceptance as a novice researcher as I relaxed into the experience.

Clarity

Collecting and analyzing qualitative data is a complex process. At times I felt as though I was floating in a sea of data. There were many questions related to how much data to collect, what questions to ask next, and what qualitative data analysis techniques to apply to determine emerging patterns that had not yet surfaced. A field researcher has to respond in an evolving environment that often feels murky and confusing.

Arthur Zajonc (2009) links contemplative practice with insight. His model that identifies a cyclical process of sustained, focused attention and open attention in meditation is one that I have contemplated for years (Zajonc, 2009). This model had primarily lived as a theoretical construct in my mind, yet while immersed in the research process I applied it to the rhythms of scholarly work and contemplative practice. I was beginning to live the model by alternating sustained, focused attention on

research activities with open attention in mindfulness practices. Several times moments of clarity followed mindfulness practice and directed next steps or resulted in “ah-ha” moments. Field researchers both plan and remain open to surprises, discoveries, and “ah-ha” moments (Davis & Breede, 2015).

I continued these practices after returning home as I completed data analysis and developed final dissertation chapters. Transcripts were spread across my office floor as I wrote and rewrote possible explanations for emerging themes. Our Labrador retriever took to napping on these piles and I found myself frequently revisiting transcripts from under the dozing dog to look for hidden clues. I created multiple data analysis matrices, ranked the order of commonly used phrases, and examined outlier voices while piecing together this mysterious puzzle. I found that taking a break after several sustained hours of work to go on a mindful walk and sit upon a meditation rock in the forest was often the tipping point needed to uncover an insight; clarity seemed to magically appear. Returning on the path home, I would remember a statement in one of the transcripts that held a clue or had a deeper insight about an emerging pattern. One day while walking home an important theme clearly emerged. I realized that each of the participants was engaging in praxis, a process of reflecting on one’s practice and then choosing the next best action as people gain critical awareness of their condition and attempt to transform and liberate (Freire, 1970). Several of the participants discussed the effects of a standards-based curriculum on their teaching and students. They noted how an overfocus on test scores had increased their stress levels and shifted the mood and instruction in the classroom in ways that did not align with their whole child development philosophy. They explained how they were beginning to counter this situation by making new choices in the classroom. Some even used mindfulness practices with students and introduced them to colleagues. They were engaging in praxis and attempting to transform the school environment. This “ah-ha” moment became an important thread in my dissertation. Mindfulness practice supported clarity while analyzing and interpreting data.

I wonder if introducing mindfulness practice to doctoral candidates would support success and identity development as an emerging scholar. In addition to developing research skills, clarity around the nature of the scholarship and one's identity as a scholar could be supported. Bentz and Shapiro (1998) suggest that learning to conduct research can result in feelings of self-doubt. New scholars may experience insecurity and confusion while at the same time expected to assume a leadership role. Mindfulness practice may be one way for individuals to embrace uncertainty in the research field, remain present with an evolving researcher identity, and experience moments of clarity.

Mindful Presence

There is a unique presence often noticeable in those who commit to many years of regular contemplative or mindfulness practice. There is a calmness, a grounded presence, and an ability to be fully present with others and situations as they arise. Although I see development of these characteristics as a work in progress, a commitment to regular practice and increasing practice throughout the day had a profound impact on my experiences as a new researcher. I found myself relaxing into the research experience as opposed to over dwelling on my performance as a researcher.

The practice of present moment awareness and observation that is foundational in mindfulness practices strengthened my research skills and created opportunities to explore a new identity as a researcher. It strengthened my ability to be fully present during interviews with participants and sense the next best question to ask or when to pause a bit longer and wait for additional explanation. It helped me confirm that emerging themes during data analysis were fully supported by the data and allowed me to stay present with uncomfortable experiences during the research process. Interior observations created greater awareness around reflexivity, helping me recognize if I was projecting my own thoughts and experiences into the research field. I was also able to explore who I am as an evolving scholar and the unique insights that I offer.

Participation in mindfulness practice deepened my skills and understanding of mindfulness. I found that mindfulness became easier to prac-

tice over time and entered into my day more frequently as the program progressed. A parallel existed with participants; greater ease integrating mindful presence into work and life activities was also reported by participants who engaged in regular mindfulness practice.

Conclusion

Studies conclude that regular mindfulness practice improves one's ability to focus attention, draw awareness to the present moment, and maintain flexible thought (McCown et al. 2010). Mindfulness practice cultivates particular skills and abilities, including equanimity, non-grasping orientation, humility, patience, and clarity (Zajonc, 2009). These qualities support a field researcher while navigating complex research situations with greater awareness.

Researcher choices reflect who we are and what we believe to be important. We often like to think that we can remain objective in our scholarly endeavors, yet we are situated within a particular context and make meaning based on our experiences. Even the selection of a research question reflects a myriad of beliefs and expectations. Consistent contemplative or mindfulness practice could begin to unravel the mystery of why we ask the questions we do, pursue particular research topics, and how we engage with participants, settings, methods, and data in our scholarship. It could also strengthen our ability to discern, observe, record, and interpret data with greater skill. Finally, it may support reflexivity and greater comfort in the researcher role.

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