

**Elk Coast Institute for Mindful Sustainable Innovation (ECI)**  
**Group 1 2015 Weekend Working Retreat Summary**  
**What is Mindfulness?**

In the background papers provided by Peter Eisenberger and Graciela Chichilnisky for the ECI planning retreat in July 2015, the Institute's founders describe several salient points that provide a context for the perceived value of mindfulness in fully executing the goals/objectives of the ECI:

**ECI Concept Paper:**

"The key to addressing the challenges posed by the Anthropocene is for our innovations to be designed to help us live in harmony with our planet and one another. Eisenberger has focused on the impact of the transition on the process of innovation. In his analysis the heroic scientist is replaced by a multidisciplinary team that are cooperating in an open source format to create the knowledge and technology needed to design our future. It is purposeful with the objective that both humans and our planet prosper by aligning what we do so it is both good for our species and good for the rest of life on our planet. This is *mindful innovation*."

"The critical feature that guides all decisions are our values and the two ones that serve as the foundation for our actions are Compassion and the Golden Rule.....In our Anthropocene era the goal to meet our needs remains but to do so in a way that creates harmony between us and with our planet. The key clearly is to integrate the new values into the knowledge generation, innovation, and implementation process."

"Goal 2 of the ECLMSI is to facilitate the design of technology to address what the humans and the planet need within a framework of compassion and the Golden Rule provided by the institute by bringing together earthling innovators of the future with those that have done it in the past with input from those with expertise on values and culture in the presence of majestic nature."

"It will help instill the values of compassion and the golden rule that provide the foundation for mindfulness by offering information about and access to the many alternative paths to achieving it. The one common feature is the connection to the majesty of nature as both a spiritual force and a reminder of the beauty we are working to protect."

**Challenge of Co-Evolution**

"It is very important to have a vision of that other shore, so we can move towards it successfully and safely. The best way to reach the other shore is as a cooperative group – as Earthlings making informed decisions together about the future of all life on our planet. I also believe that in the process of working together to successfully co-evolve and design our future, we Earthlings will be happier and will discover a kind of spiritual fulfillment that our current Darwinian-based existence lacks. Therefore, all you fellow Earthlings, let's innovate together and strike out for the

other shore, because as you will see, we really have no choice; the shore we already left behind no longer exist.”

### **It Is All About Change**

“The Siddhartha effect (also known as the Overview Effect) of our age was triggered by us seeing our planet from the moon. That new reference frame changed fundamentally our view of our relationship to each other, we are literally all earthlings, and to our home, planet Earth as this precious and very small oasis in the vast darkness of space. The profound conclusion of the analysis in this book is that for this change as well the best answer is if we all practice compassion and the golden rule. If we use those principles to make our decisions and guide our actions between each other and with our planet our species will successfully meet the challenges we face making us happier and our home will be healthier.”

To summarize the founder’s perspective on mindfulness, it refers to the capacity for meta cognition, plasticity, and execution of ideas while being present in a non-dual perspective where humans are not separate from the planet but are integral to the web of life. Mindfulness requires a non-silo based multidisciplinary approach that is characterized by openness and attentiveness (the ability to notice everything that is transpiring). The essence and nature of mindfulness develops capacity for responsiveness in compassionate activity. It is the placement of humans in majestic nature that fosters or catalyzes a mindful, compassionate point of view.

To be consistently mindful requires training or setting in order to be accustomed to it. Our habits of silo-based , dualist thinking are like a piece of paper that has been rolled up. We unroll it and it goes back to its original shape, a dualist view of the world. In the same way we can innovate for a finite time frame then we completely forget our mindfulness in the very next moment and go back to a dual view of the world. When we stabilize mindfulness, we can maintain and accomplish the POV central to the ECI thesis.

### **Group 1 Summary**

To formalize the value of mindfulness for the ECI, Group 1 focused on definitions, methods, and integration of mindfulness into ECIMCI paradigm.

#### *Definitions*

The colloquial definition of mindfulness is paying attention, in the moment, on purpose. Mindfulness is about stopping, paying attention, becoming aware of the present moment and not judging whatever is happening as ‘good’ or ‘bad.’ One can say that mindfulness is a way of life, a way of life that depends on mindfulness, not a scheming mind. Mindfulness can mean activism, doing things with intention, plasticity, and meta cognition.

Mindfulness has a specific meaning in the context of Buddhist meditation practices as it is a well-established discipline. Buddhist mindfulness means the practice of

attention and awareness on the senses, feelings, and thoughts leading to emotional/physical well being, clarity, spacious, and equanimity. It is said in Buddhist text that one "sustains primordially free awareness with natural mindfulness". This means without being distracted, without being carried away, exactly as it is, one rests freely in a nondual view of the world. In other words, genuine, innate mindfulness is the result of nondistracted when one does not get lost in the undercurrent of thoughts of duality. Mindfulness is the essence of buddhadharma, to be mindful at all times, while walking, sitting, eating, resting, innovating.

The practice of mindfulness produces the capacity to change our frame of reference. This can lead to a compassionate/empathetic point of view along with a nondual perspective characterized by an openness to multidisciplinary and a oneness with respect to our relationship with the other kingdoms of nature. Compassion is defined as understanding the frame of others with a measure of humility recognizing that one's frame may not be better than another's. Compassion is often associated with feeling the pain of other sentient beings.

Empirical evidence suggests that mindfulness can influence physiological processes and can activate creativity. For example, when compared to the placebo conditions, mindfulness meditation-based pain relief engages multiple mechanisms that are associated with cognitive control, emotion regulation, and reducing the activation of low-level sensory processes. The findings also show us that mindfulness employs a unique subset of brain regions when compared to the placebo conditions. These findings provide evidence that mindfulness meditation is not a pseudo-type of cognitive intervention (Journal of Neuroscience, 11/18/15)

Mindfulness is increasingly being integrated into business planning as a method to develop more self-aware leaders who understands themselves, their motivations, their values and the purpose of their leadership. Over time, individuals who undergo mindfulness training are more effective and satisfied in their work.

Mindfulness innovation targeting environmental systems is synonymous with the concepts of:

- Sustainability – Managing resources in a way that guarantees the welfare and promotes equity for current and future generations;
- Resilience – The capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function structure, and feedbacks; a system's buffering capacity;
- Regenerative – Correcting toward a stable, resilient system;
- Generative – Future leaning innovations;

Mindful sustainable innovation broadly means:

- Innovate for good
- Tech for good
- Data for good

- Align all interests/goals to avoid friction, paying attention to what you do
- Empathy/compassion

An example of mindful sustainable innovation are carbon draw down technologies: direct air capture and biochar. These technologies capture tropospheric carbon dioxide using chemical sorbents or photosynthesis. Once captured the carbon dioxide molecule (in the form of carbon dioxide or plant based sugars) are repurposed to generate carbon negative transportation fuels or materials that regenerate soils.

### *Methodologies*

Methods to activate mindfulness fall into three categories:

- Integration into nature – Also known as biophilia, this is the effect of Nature’s interaction on human performance/perspective;
- Mindfulness/Meditation – Mindfulness awakens the direct experience of nature via the senses leading to a nondualist view of the world;
- Plant medicines – Traditionally applied in ceremonial practice, plant medicines include cannabis, mushrooms, Ayahuasca, San Pedro;
- Sonic/Somatic/Scent Healing – Techniques using sound, touch and smell to activate openness;

Each method has its methodological, efficacy, and cultural strengths and weaknesses that lead to barriers and/or conduits for adoption. The ECI Board will need to determine which methods will be adopted as part of its mentor program. While being sensitive to societal norms, openness is recommended in how mindfulness is taught and integrated into the ECI curriculum.

### *Integration*

The integration of mindfulness into the ECI curriculum will occur through direct mentorship. Knowledge is transferred that will facilitate the application of mindfulness techniques into the innovation process. Themes of rapid iteration, minimum viable products, and markets for open source innovation will be championed as themes fueled by mindfulness frame of view.

### *Summary*

The ECI is intended to catalyze or activate a new way of thinking informed by the principles of stewardship, creativity, regeneration, mindfulness and benevolence. As Einstein famously said, “you cannot solve a problem with the same consciousness that created it.”