

Mindful Coaching - A Process of Fulfillment

Billie Frances, MA

MY STORY

“That’s it!” I thought, as I waited in my car for a light to change. The guest on a radio interview program had just described how she taught and counseled people in ways that empowered them. And in that moment in 1986 I knew I was to become a Marriage and Family Therapist.

I didn’t have any idea what it took to enroll in the master’s program, how much time and money I needed to complete the training process, or how to market and manage a private practice. Nor did I understand how this new possibility and my work history would allow me to recapture my lifetime desire to teach. (I had already gathered enough business cards from varying enterprises to create a wall-sized collage without fulfilling this intention.) All this would be revealed later. That day in my car, I made up my mind, “I’m going for it!”

My enthusiasm was met with discouragement. “Therapists are a dime a dozen,” Tom said. “There’s one on every corner,” Hester said. There were other personal and professional setbacks too. I had to repeat a course, which delayed my graduation a full year. There was a divorce fraught by betrayal and several failed attempts at the state licensing exam. My finances diminished after I traded home ownership for an education.

But desire to use my talents to reveal wholeness within others and myself proved stronger than these disappointments, failures, and financial insecurities. I stopped trying to figure out what the examiners wanted and gave them what I had. I stood by my authentic passion and released the outcome. Finally a miracle occurred. I received my Marriage and Family Therapist license in 1993.

My career in counseling provided the opportunity to support individuals, couples, and group members and gave me an opportunity to teach. Surrender had led me back to my passion. I created and facilitated couples’ communication courses and weight management seminars and taught classes on financial freedom, time management, and spiritual counseling.

In 1996 I received training in personal coaching and four years later began teaching Mindful Coach Certification for therapists, health care providers, teachers and others who wanted to add the skills and methods of coaching to their profession. Creating and facilitating Mindful Coach Certification has delighted my heart and blessed my life.

Mindful Coaching is founded on the premise that beyond talent, opportunity, or perseverance we are inspired by deep passion and commitment. The purpose of mindful coaching is fulfillment. The vision is to develop a greater awareness of wholeness as foundation of all change.

Mindful Coaching is a process that encourages acceptance and guides exploration. Its questions invite us to be aware of our values, thoughts, and feelings as well as our

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circumstances and surroundings. Working with a coach and learning to be our own coach promotes change that is powerful and empowering.

In 2000, 14 years after hearing the radio interview that changed my life, I was approached to co-host *It's Your Call*, a radio talk show in which callers receive coaching on the air. The show is dedicated to helping people connect with their dreams and take action to manifest their deepest desires. I had come full circle.

In service to my clients, students, callers, and myself, I have come to understand that to teach is to empower.

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Choosing a life on purpose rather than living an unexamined life means that we trust the moment and are present in it. To be present is to be mindful. Mindfulness is awareness. Mindfulness is recognizing our connectedness to all things. Mindfulness is making thoughtful decisions based on our inner wisdom from a deep understanding of our life's purpose. Mindfulness means being attentive, nonjudgmental and accepting. Mindfulness is the choice to live consciously and to let go of any desire to control, achieve, or resolve.

The process of fulfillment is ordered. Growth follows a natural progression. This is not to say that there is a straight line from where we are to where we want to be. The natural progression is that the land needs to be prepared before it is seeded, and a seed needs to be planted before the harvest. And as nutrients are added and weeds are removed, the seedling gets stronger. As we apply this analogy to our living including our desire to expand and grow, we discover ease in awareness and an abundant harvest by grace.

The process of fulfillment is its own reward. The joy of living the process is the awareness that there is nothing missing and nothing to do. We need not wait for the rose to be in full bloom to appreciate it. It is also magnificent as dormant potential.

The process of fulfillment can be learned and practiced. We may be more accustomed to answering urgent demands for our immediate attention than waiting, watching, and being in the present moment. We can learn to make thoughtful rather than snap decisions and heart-connected responses rather than off-the-cuff remarks. We can learn to be vulnerable rather than guarded and to be connected rather than cut off. We can rediscover the nobility of patience and renew our trust in the evolution of our lives.

Use the following sections to expand your personal and professional fulfillment. The process narrows from an all-inclusive ring of personal awareness to targeted goals and actions. Each section includes **Contemplation and discovery** questions to inspire the process of change. Spend as much time as you need with the questions. Some answers may be readily accessible while others will sprout over time. Be patient with your pace and with yourself. Coach yourself with compassion and enjoy the process.

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LOVING KINDNESS – clearing the land

Releasing discontent as the impetus for change is the first step to fulfillment. Change that is motivated by trying to make us better is rooted in frustration and fear. Mindful change approaches both what is and what we desire with kindness and awareness. Acceptance blesses where we are and asks that we completely approve of ourselves. As we learn to be present with who, what, and where we are and wish to be, we discover our next step is revealed with ease and by grace. Deep appreciation is how we best clear the way to fulfillment.

Contemplation and discovery:

What is sacred about this moment?

How can I be more peaceful right now?

What am I grateful for?

Which thoughts, physical sensations, or emotions need my attention?

How can my mind, emotions, and body be in loving communication?

What are my good intentions?

How can I remember my joy?

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MIND YOUR MIND – preparing the soil

Minding the mind requires vigilance. Our thoughts can lead us toward our heart's desire or burden our hearts with hopelessness. We need to be aware of our thoughts as soon as they sprout. Thoughts or beliefs that support our highest good, and harm no one, can be nurtured and blessed. When we notice thoughts that diminish others or ourselves, we can gently weed them out lest they overtake our positive intentions and choke off our good.

Just as we may need quiet in order to think, we need awareness in order to know our thoughts. Techniques to improve awareness include:

- silent contemplation or meditation
- keeping the company of others who are happy
- journaling
- taking time to appreciate nature
- establishing order and balance
- joyful movement
- music
- helping others
- creative expression
- prayer
- laughter
- expressing love

Mindful practices that completely capture our attention unite us in a very powerful way with others, our surroundings, and ourselves. We forget our separateness and remember our connectedness with all of life. While it may seem as though we lose ourselves in these practices, it is perhaps more accurate to say that we find ourselves as we surrender into them. Our souls sigh. Doubt and fear dissolve. We belong. Returning home in mindful connection, we release thinking and embrace knowing. Mindfulness guides and guards our fulfillment.

Contemplation and discovery:

Which current beliefs support me? Which limit me?

What do I need to forgive in others or myself?

What could prevent me from succeeding?

What do I need to release in order to make room for this?

How does this serve the well-being of others and myself?

What would it take to be present right now?

To whom have I given my power?

What are my assets?

What makes me stand out?

How do I make a difference?

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VISION – dedicating the land

What do you wish to grow? Do you wish to grow a business, develop a talent, expand your knowledge, embrace a loved one, learn a skill, start a foundation, master a trade, create a work of art?

So often we begin with action rather than contemplation. We want to get into motion, sow some wild oats, work by the sweat of our brow, stir up some dust. We fill our planners and electronic calendars with unending tasks. We huff and we puff and exhaust ourselves in the belief that surely enough activity will give us what we want. Yet we discover that activity disconnected from vision is short-lived.

Vision is the life force that inspires transformation. Vision reveals the higher purpose served by our labors and gives us stamina.

Allow time to be still and know. Embrace inactivity in order to discover a grand plan that is right for fulfillment.

Contemplation and discovery:

What is my purpose?
What do I want to create? Or to grow?
What is inspiring this?
What does my inner wisdom say?
How can I best use my energy?
How is this in alignment with my highest good?
How will this be of value to others and myself?
What will ground me when the going gets tough?

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VALUES – planting significance

When our actions are motivated by what we hold dear, we are empowered by congruence. We value what we say is important. Values help us achieve our potential. We choose values from among alternatives then prize them publicly. Values may include:

- family
- personal and professional development
- leisure
- money
- achievement
- privacy
- companionship
- surroundings
- independence
- leadership
- security
- helping others
- religion or spirituality
- self-expression
- recognition

As we reflect on our values, we become more aware of ourselves as individuals with a choice about our destiny. Values give us the framework and freedom to choose specific endeavors, associations, and lifestyle that help us express that which is personally significant.

Contemplation and discovery:

What is most important to me?

Which endeavors express my values?

How does my allocation of time and money honor my values?

Which personal values am I honoring right now?

How are my values and the values of my associates aligned?

How will I know if my values have been compromised?

What is my strategy to keep my values in the forefront?

What am I tolerating in people or a situation that opposes what is important to me?

How well do my speech, lifestyle, and environment reflect my values?

How can I define my values in terms that are most meaningful to me?

How could I be more in integrity with people, places, organizations, or institutions?

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COMMITMENT – consecrating the earth

A commitment is our word of honor. A commitment is a statement of intention that is ongoing. Commitments, unlike goals, are not measured or quantified. An example of a commitment in the area of relationship might be: *I am committed to having a mate who adds love and joy to my life.* In the area of health, a commitment might be: *I am committed to having vibrant health and physical well-being.*

Commitment inspires courageous action on our own behalf. Compromising our integrity creates suffering and causes visible and invisible distress. When we act in opposition to our commitments, we may experience uneasiness or confusion. Perhaps the inability to concentrate or a gnawing feeling in the pit of our stomach gives us away. We can use these warning signals to draw ourselves back into alignment with who we say we are. We gain well-being, momentum, and confidence by honoring our commitments and keeping our word.

Contemplation and discovery:

What am I committed to creating in the area of career? Finances? Health?

What am I committed to creating in the area of intimate relationship? With family and friends? For personal and spiritual growth? In my physical surroundings? For fun and recreation?

How can I best remain true to my commitments?

What could happen to undermine my commitment?

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GOALS – the seeds of desire

Although commitments define the quality and characteristics of our experience, goals define the quantity and time parameters of our experience. An example of a goal that is specific, measurable, and delineated by time might be “to increase annual income 20% by June 30” or “30 minutes of aerobic exercise, 3 times per week.” Declaring how much, how many, and by when clarifies the action. Goal setting as a process provides the opportunity to assess our progress, reconfirm our intentions, and determine whether or not our actions will take us where we want to go. Be bold in setting goals. Be gentle in observing and correcting them.

Contemplation and discovery:

Why is this goal important to me? Is it challenging enough? Is it exciting enough?

What are the criteria for success?

How is this goal in alignment with my values? With my commitments?

By when do I want to receive or accomplish this?

What are the steps I need to take?

How will these action steps help me reach my goal?

How will I finance this?

How willing am I to be out of my comfort zone?

What is my strategy to observe and correct my goals?

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ACTION - a labor of love

Actions that are inspired by awareness are joyful, timely, easy, and fulfilling. Taking action means moving from the abstract to the concrete and from concept to form. Action that follows a time of contemplating or planning can delight our senses with the sights, smells, and sounds of work. Our single-mindedness unleashes the power of our intention to fortify and enliven our activity.

Contemplation and discovery:

What needs to be done?
What steps will I take?
How can I best pace my activities?
Do I have everything I need to begin?
How will I overcome procrastination?
What will help me stay motivated?
What is most important? Most urgent?
How can I break down the action?

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SUPPORT – nutrients for the soil

The support of others is vital to our “unfoldment.” We need people who will congratulate our attempts and our courage. We want to be acknowledged just for participating, showing up, giving it our best shot, risking, going for it. Comments, corrections, comparisons, or criticism are best delivered by invitation only and long after the workers have left the field. Sincere appreciation allows us to fulfill the purpose of relationships, which is to learn to love ourselves in the presence of another.

Receiving encouragement, working as a team, and benefiting from the collective wisdom are all worthy endeavors; however, asking for help can be precarious. We know that we are resourceful beings guided by inner wisdom, yet we desire to be in community sharing the common wisdom and multiplying our resources.

Somewhere between depending on others for happiness and isolating in search of self is a place where we are free to relate, share, express, enjoy, and celebrate with all in our homes, community, and world. There is a vast territory of possibility between dependence and independence. As we are willing to explore our options, and learn to release patterns of low esteem, we are free to step into healthy, interdependent relationships and partnerships. Interdependence is relying on each other in healthy, mutually beneficial ways. When we part company from separateness and come back to wholeness, we allow connection to nourish our souls and our endeavors.

Contemplation and discovery:

How can I include others in ways that empower them?

How could this be harmful?

What or who needs to be acknowledged?

Who else is or needs to be involved?

Is there work I can delegate?

Do I need to take time away to be alone with my thoughts and feelings?

How will I know when to seek help?

Would it be helpful to pray about this?

Who can I humbly ask for help?

How could I benefit from feedback?

Have I given others and myself permission to make mistakes?

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EVALUATION – surveying the garden

Evaluation takes place throughout the fulfillment process. Before beginning an endeavor of any kind, determine benchmarks for success and rewards for reaching them. During the activity, ask yourself questions to help you measure your growth and prune your activities. Make plans to reward yourself and others as you reach rest stops along the path of fulfillment.

Contemplation and discovery:

How can I maintain balance with the rest of my life?
How can I learn to observe and correct rather than criticize my action steps?
How will I know if I'm on the right track?
How well does my physical environment support me?
What will keep me motivated?
What are my tools for overcoming fear and procrastination?
How will I respond to failure? To distractions? To setbacks?
How can I reward my progress? Measure my results? Celebrate my success?

The soil is neutral. It simply produces according to the seeds we provide. Our role is to trust the creative process and nurture its unfolding. Our lot is to sow our passion and tend our garden with intention, awareness, and compassion. Our part is to weed out judgment, trim analysis, and harvest happiness. Our responsibility is to establish mindful practices to expand our awareness and enrich our lives.

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Mindful Practices – Essential Elements for Growth

Commitment is freedom. Practices done on a regular basis keep us on solid ground. Mindful practices are life-enhancing habits that nurture our physical, mental, intellectual, and spiritual well being. Mindful practices expand our awareness so that we can increase our options. Secular routine becomes sacred ritual, and discipline generates freedom.

Give up the need to understand. We will naturally learn from our experience if we remain mindful and attentive. Through nonjudgmental discernment we become aware of what supports and what runs counter to our values, intentions, and well being. Excessive time and energy spent analyzing, calculating, and assessing robs the creative process. Mindful observation allows us to correct our course. When we give up the need to understand, we open ourselves to knowing.

Everything is simply interesting. Nothing takes us out of the present moment faster than succumbing to specialness. When we believe that our result is the best or the worst or that we are completely amazing or completely inept, our comparisons return us to the past.

Interesting is neither faulty nor fabulous. Interesting is present-time awareness. What if we declare life interesting when events fall apart, interesting when events fall together and interesting when life just is?

As we learn to simply observe rather than rate, all of our experiences become valuable. Rather than having ups and downs, try expanding the joy of now by accepting everything just as it is ... **simply interesting.**

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Excerpted from:

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To purchase *Wise Women Speak*, go to the e-store at <http://www.GuidingMindfulChange.com>, and select Hot Buys.

Billie Frances is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, a licensed spiritual counselor, and a trained personal and business coach. Her vision is to guide mindful change through inspiration and empowerment. She supports individuals, couples, families, and group members through her private practice in San Diego.

Billie is passionate about teaching. She founded Mindful Coach Certification for therapists, health care and other professionals to learn to be present with their clients in order to empower change. She created and facilitated communication courses and weight management seminars and taught classes on time management, financial freedom, and spiritual counseling. She is a graduate of the University of California – Santa Barbara and earned a master’s degree at the United States International University (Alliant University). Billie has been a member of the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, the International Coach Federation and the San Diego Professional Coaches Alliance. She is a consultant for business and community-based organizations. Teaching, training, and counseling have taught her the value of working with and learning from others – this book project is one more step in supporting her vision.

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