

## Tripping On Mindfulness

by: Maya Talisman Frost One of the ironies of mindfulness is that it's still possible to be forgetful, klutzy, or even distracted while doing our best to pay attention. Why? We are choosing where to focus and so there are, by necessity, bits of information that aren't getting the full laser treatment. It's simply not possible to be mindful of everything all at once. That's the beauty of it. You can shine your mental high beams on, say, fully connecting with every person you talk to today. While being very aware of your interactions with others, you might trip on the edge of the carpet. Clumsy and mindful may seem like strange bedfellows, but they are intimate nonetheless. True story: I know a reference librarian who was in the habit of reading while walking. One day, she was walking the two blocks to her house during her lunch break while reading a new book. She was so completely focused on the words she was reading that she tripped on the sidewalk, landing in a heap right there on Ash Street. Fortunately, this happened in front of the fire station, and the paramedics came to her aid immediately. Unfortunately, in addition to her badly-bruised ego, she broke not one but both arms. The book she was reading? "Coping With Attention Deficit Disorder" You can't make up this stuff! Mindfulness doesn't lend itself to multitasking-- especially when we need to watch where we're going. One-track mindfulness is ideal, but two tracks can work if one of them involves repetitive physical activity. Breathing, washing dishes, eating, walking, sweeping, swimming? Perfect. Tack on another--like reading--and you'll end up stumbling, too. Even if you've never done a faceplant on concrete, chances are you've developed your own quirky mental editing tricks. We choose our targets based on what we decide at that moment is most meaningful. Your son might be totally immersed in playing the guitar and forget all about his math homework. Your friend might get caught up in a woodworking project and forget to call you back. You might get so absorbed in a conversation with someone at the grocery store that you forget to buy the bread that was the reason for your trip. Mindfulness helps us pay attention, but it doesn't make us perfect. And that's perfect! It shows us our imperfections while helping us become less judgmental about them. A hefty sense of humor helps. Use mindfulness to help you "step back" before tripping--on the stories in your head, the swirl of emotions you feel, and the chaos of your life. Develop the mental agility to step back, step into and step out of your chosen focus. You might remain klutzy. You may forget to buy bread. But you won't end up tripping over what matters most.

## About the Author

Maya Talisman Frost is a mind masseuse offering specialized mindfulness training in Portland, Oregon. Trained in conflict resolution, she uses her 25-year meditation practice and plenty of humor to teach real-world techniques for paying attention to what matters most. To subscribe to her free weekly ezine, the Friday Mind Massage, visit <http://www.MindMasseuse.com>.

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