

Why Mindfulness in Designing Your Life for Women Retreats

“Mindfulness involves an elemental and spontaneous openness to experience, grounded in the body, in the timeless, in not expecting anything to happen, a befriending and inhabiting of this present moment for its own sake. When you rest in mindful awareness, you are participating intimately in life as its unfolding, seeing what happens, experimenting, allowing the original beauty and mystery of the world and of yourself to speak to you...”¹

You have just completed an assessment of your balance, you’ve noticed what gives you energy and what drains you, and now you are doing a “Calm Heart” mediation with Andrea and the women in the Designing Your Life workshop (DYL). You are breathing deeply, hand over your heart, grounded in the present. For fifteen minutes your breath and heart are taking you into a reflective and tranquil space. *“One of the strengths of this program is the mindful moments where Andrea brings us clarity and grace.” (DYL for Women Participant)*

Mindfulness is a great match with life design as both disciplines are non-judgmental, and have no point of view on what’s right for your life. There is no one right design, one road to success, or one best life. Instead we offer a method and set of tools to build your way forward, trying experiments that will help you discern what lights you up and brings meaning and joy to your life. And we compliment this wayfinding with mindful moments that help women experience what rings true for them in the present moment as they engage with the life design process.

We also use mindfulness to enrich our focus on discernment - the process of knowing. While there are many ways to know and make choices, our western society has over-valued cognitive knowing at the expense of physical, spiritual, emotional, and social knowing. We see in our programs that the mindful moments help women tune into their own discernment and get clearer about what’s important to them, what they must un-learn, and what paths they want to explore for the future. We consistently hear from women that these moments of present awareness help them integrate what they are learning into the actions they want to take going forward. *“I liked best the moment when I had to pause, reflect and be present to what I was feeling about balance in my life.” (DYL for Women Participant)*

The research on breathing, meditating and mindfulness is conclusive and positive. There is a tiny neuron cluster in the brain that links breathing to relaxation, attention, excitement and anxiety. The practice of controlling and slowing our breath to shift our consciousness from an aroused or frantic state to a more meditative state triggers increased tranquility and a sense of well-being.² In addition, Mindfulness Based Stress Relief (MBSR) programs have proven that a consistent mindfulness practice can reduce stress, anxiety and chronic pain.³

Integrating mindful moments into Designing Your Life for women makes this a special retreat. Learn more about this practice and Andrea Ciafardini, our Mindfulness Instructor by watching this short video. (Click to video): written by Susan Burnett.

¹John Kabat-Zinn, creator of the Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, October 1, 2009

²Mark Krasgow MDPHd at Standford and Kevin Yacjlem MDPHd at USCF, 2016

³Kabat-Zinn 1982; Kabat-Zin et al 1992