



Wellbeing Insight

Awareness

“All great men and women went through difficulties to get where they are, all of them made mistakes...They found that self-awareness was the way out and through”, Ryan Holiday, *Ego is the Enemy*.

Performance = Awareness + Responsibility espoused by Sir John Whitmore.

“Mindfulness is not about forcing your mind not to wander...It is more about being aware of when the mind is wandering, and, as best you can and as gently as you can, redirecting your attention and reconnecting with what is most salient and important to you in that moment, in the here and now of life unfolding...the awareness that arises by paying attention on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally”, Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living*.

What is so refreshing to me in Ryan Holiday’s words, is the reminder that none of us has an unchecked path, free of difficulties in life. Indeed, it is my view the perversity of the human condition, that we think we want this, but in fact it would not be good for our growth and character. Our difficulties and mistakes do not make us ‘weak and bad’ people either necessarily. In Holiday’s view, it is the way we deal with them and work through them which leads to greatness. And the key? Self-Awareness. With our awareness of ourselves and our values, we have our guide to the way through the obstacles and the mistakes. We will have the opportunity too, in choosing to follow this path, to savour contentment and perhaps achieve personal greatness through self-actualisation.

Sir John Whitmore, the father of performance coaching, sees raising awareness as the key to the coaching approach. If the coach can ask the questions that prompt reflection and self-examination, then the insights which flow are awareness. In the coaching context, the responsibility to act upon the awareness gained is the coachee’s, which potentially leads to their enhanced performance. In my coaching practice, learning to inquire and then allow, has been the key to a resonant coaching relationship. Ownership of the awareness gained left with the coachee, allows agency to remain also and affords gains to be earned.

Recently, I have been delving into the writings of Jon Kabat-Zinn, his book *Full Catastrophe Living* a Christmas gift from my son. Bringing mindfulness to the discussion of awareness is illuminating and a practical way of building awareness through mindful practice is an empowering invitation. We all have the capacity to learn to pay more attention. Kabat-Zinn’s gentle approach bespeaks of loving kindness to self in learning to be in the present moment, as he urges us to avoid scolding ourselves when we do not manage to do this easily and quickly.



Holiday's compassionate insights and understanding of the human condition, coupled with Whitmore's non-directive model, rounded off with Kabat-Zinn's gentle guidance to incrementally raising awareness through mindfulness practices, provide a bedrock of wisdom for all of us who choose to listen.