

EARTH SAVERS

MINDFULNESS How many times a day do you do only one thing at a time? If you are like most people, you probably juggle e-mail, the cell phone, text messages, facebook and kids, all while you are driving.

IT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE TO RESIST THE LURE OF MULTITASKING IN OUR CULTURE TODAY.

Scan through the want ads and it appears that multitasking is a skill required for every position. Look around while stopped at a red light, every driver seems to be talking on the phone, checking their e-mail, and changing the radio station all while impatiently waiting for the light to change. Multitasking, for better or worse, has become our way of life. In his 1999 book *Faster* James Gleick wrote, "We are multitasking connoisseurs-experts in crowding, pressing, packing, and overlapping distinct activities in our all-too-finite moments." We all know that our constant multitasking is stressful, but recent scientific research has shown that it is unproductive and even bad for you!

WHILE MULTITASKING MAY SEEM TO BE THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE IT THROUGH OUR HECTIC DAYS, RESEARCHERS HAVE FOUND THAT IT PUTS OUR BODIES UNDER A GREAT DEAL OF STRESS AND OFTEN CAUSES US TO BE LESS EFFICIENT.

Every time we switch our attention from one task to another our brains have to spend a few seconds refocusing. Throughout the day, these seconds add up and juggling a multitude of jobs causes us to "feel a constant low level of panic and guilt." In addition to stressing us out and slowing us down, in some situations multitasking can even kill you. A study published in 2001 found that drivers who were trying to keep up with text messaging while driving had slower reaction times than drivers who were drunk!

THE SOLUTION TO BREAKING OURSELVES OF OUR MULTITASKING WAYS IS DECEPTIVELY SIMPLE.

Spending a little time everyday perfecting the art of "single tasking", also known as mindfulness, can bring much needed calm and simplicity into our lives. Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to your thoughts and trying to maintain your focus fully on the present moment. Disengaging your mind from the commentary and chatter in your head and allowing yourself to completely experience the task at hand. Drive while you are driving. Eat while you are eating. Mindfulness is one of the most basic and forms of meditation. You can do it where ever you are whatever you are doing. Mindfulness is actually so effective at reducing stress that many psychologists and psychiatrists have incorporated it into the treatment of anxiety, depression, and substance abuse.

MINDFULNESS EXERCISES:

- Pay attention to your environment and your breathing every time you stop at a red light.
- Find a daily task you dislike doing (laundry, cooking, dishes etc.) and focus on bringing your mind to the present and concentrating on the experience.
- Perform a body scan. Beginning with your feet and moving up your body, consciously tense and relax every muscle. Make yourself aware of the parts of your body that are carrying more tension and spend a moment trying to completely relax those muscles.
- Eat a meal mindfully. Don't rush through. Take your time and experience every aspect of the meal. Pay attention the appearance of the food before you eat it. Take a moment to fully appreciate the taste and texture of each bite before you swallow it.

"THERE IS TIME ENOUGH FOR EVERYTHING IN THE COURSE OF THE DAY, IF YOU DO BUT ONE THING AT ONCE, BUT THERE IS NOT TIME ENOUGH IN THE YEAR, IF YOU WILL DO TWO THINGS AT A TIME." - LORD CHESTERFIELD