



## Chapter 5 – *Really* Paying Attention is Important

To me, paying attention is a subject that anyone with attention deficits or issues can learn, practice, and develop. If mindfulness can be learned and practiced, then it is probably '*a courage*' too. Can I focus my attention when needed, without having to look for my attention first, without having to get my own attention?

'Boiling a frog' is a management practice like giving someone enough rope. The idea is that when it is time for a frog to go, throwing the frog into a pot of boiling water doesn't work because the frog simply jumps out and stays. The proper way to boil that frog is to let the frog happily start out in a pot of cool water, then slowly raise the water temperature; by the time the water starts to boil it is too late for the frog to jump out...but just in time for the frog-legs dinner, and thanks to frogs not being able to pay attention well enough.

It might be that getting the frogs out of safety conscious environments is exactly the right thing to do, and that this is the exact way to do it, or it also might be that frogs in general gain a protected status and can be told in clear and interactive ways that they need to up their paying-attention-game. Paying attention means being mindful and the essence of my mindfulness is in recognizing the exact moment that I return from a daydream or normal mind-wander; that I wasn't paying attention, but that I am now...it does get easier for me with practice and acknowledgment.

I am initially one of the people hardest hit because I can pay attention well enough to know I am in a pot, but I don't pay attention well enough to understand that the water temperature is changing...that something destructive is going on around me, be it an unhealthy relationship, a hostile work environment, or other things with costs that are running away unnoticed.

An example of this includes me knowing that people close to me have birthdays, but my not understanding or caring when these birthdays are or what it means to him or her to be singled-out for some special attention and acknowledgement; and just because - I don't like or want the attention myself (when I don't get the warm feelings that others do), so I extend my lack of consideration out and I end up with more time to do those things that appeal to me, instead of looking for what might appeal to the others, who appeal to me.

I can say that this is how holidays and such are for me as far back as I can remember, but I can't say if this is hard-wired into my thinking, or this just evolves from my holidays being seen by me (nearly always) as competitions filled with some unreasonable expectations I find difficult to meet; where I am frequently criticized for not meeting them correctly, so then I am also seeing these special-days as needless risks; risks of my becoming filled with unnecessary disappointment.

One mindfulness instructor points out to me that most people are never taught how to pay attention in general. I believe this, and I also believe that the most absurd, under-thought, and unrealistic expectation in life is that anyone's ability to pay attention is as natural as that he or she has skin. By paying attention I now see someone's 'birthday pot full of water' coming my way, so I can control some of the water's temperature by understanding some special needs that are not my own.

I worry about the trap that I might fall into that says that if I don't do anything, I won't do anything wrong – but I do many low-emotion *things* right and I prefer to stay away from the higher-emotional gambles whenever I can avoid them...for now.