MINDFULNESS AND SELF-ACCEPTANCE

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ABSTRACT: The present article will focus on the cognitive theory of mindfulness and its importance in achieving unconditional self-acceptance. The goal of the mindful perspective is to increase cognitive flexibility and to thereby increase behavioral flexibility and the ability to adapt to one's current environment in a meaningful manner. Empirical evidence spanning four decades attests to the beneficial effects of a *mindful* vs. *mindless* perspective. The article will focus on the following aspects of mindfulness as they apply to self-acceptance: the importance of authenticity, the tyranny of evaluation, the benefits of mistakes, the mindlessness of social comparison, the trap of rigid categories, and the acceptance of self as a mindful choice. The article concludes with a number of mindfulness applications geared toward enhancing self-acceptance.

KEY WORDS: authenticity; mindfulness; self-acceptance.

Self-acceptance is crucial to mental health. The absence of ability to unconditionally accept oneself can lead to a variety of emotional difficulties, including uncontrolled anger and depression. The person who is caught up in self-evaluation rather than self-acceptance may also be very needy and may devote considerable attention and personal resources to self-aggrandizement in order to compensate for perceived personal deficits. One of the simplest and most natural methods of reducing self-evaluation and replacing it with acceptance is to assume a mindset of mind*ful*ness rather than mind*less*ness (Langer, 1989).

Mindfulness (Langer, 1989) is a flexible cognitive state that results from drawing novel distinctions about the situation and the

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environment. When one is mindful, one is actively engaged in the present and sensitive to both context and perspective. The mindful condition is both the result of, and the continuing cause of, actively noticing new things. The cognitive state of mindfulness is distinct from the Buddhist tradition of mindfulness meditation, although post-meditative states may indeed be *mindful* in the cognitive sense (Carson & Langer, 2004). The hallmarks of the mindful condition are: (1) the ability to view both objects and situations from multiple perspectives, and (2) the ability to shift perspectives depending upon context. Mindful cognition typically is *guided* by rules and routines but it is not *governed* by them (Carson & Langer, 2004; Langer, 1989).

In contrast, *mindlessness* is a state of rigidity in which one adheres to a single perspective and acts automatically. When one is *mindless*, one is trapped in a rigid mindset and is oblivious to context or perspective. The mindless condition pigeonholes experiences, behaviors, objects, and other people into rigid categories. Mindless thought-processing and behavior are governed by rules, routines, and previously constructed categories. Much of learned information has been imparted by an authority figure or has been presented in absolute language. Individuals often accept this information mindlessly and become trapped within a single perspective, oblivious to other ways of seeing the information. In fact, individuals often view and accept their own personal experience mindlessly, unaware that they could have processed the experience from an alternate perspective or even from multiple alternate perspectives (Langer, 1989). These individuals may come to accept their original categorization of material, whether it stems from an attitude they were taught by an authority or from their own early experience, as immutable truth; that is, they become *cognitively committed* to one way of seeing information. When information and experience are processed mindlessly, the potential for reconsideration and reinterpretation is abandoned.

Learned emotional responses to people, things, ideas, and even oneself control well-being. Often these emotional responses have been learned mindlessly in a process called *premature cognitive commitment* (Chanowitz & Langer, 1981). While mindless responses can impart a (false) sense of stability and certainty, many studies have found that increasing mind*ful* responses result in greater competence, health, positive affect, creativity, and reduced burnout (see Langer, 1989, 1997 for review of research).

The essence of mindfulness theory, then, is that a flexible and open "mindset" in which one remains actively engaged in the process of drawing novel distinctions about the environment is more beneficial than a mindset in which one is judgmental and rigid, sacrificing flexibility for a sense of certainty. The state of mindfulness by definition encompasses a state of self-acceptance, as the focus of mindful attention is on acceptance of and exploration of present experience rather than on self-evaluation and self-criticism.

This article will explore mindfulness theory as it may be applied to issues of self-acceptance. It will present some of the main tenets of mindfulness theory including: the importance of authenticity, the tyranny of evaluation, the mindfulness of mistakes, the mindlessness of social comparison, the trap of rigid categories, and the choice of self-acceptance. Finally, several techniques will be presented that can be employed both inside and outside of the therapeutic setting for increasing mindfulness and healthy self-acceptance.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AUTHENTICITY

One important aspect of self-acceptance is the ability and willingness to let others see one's true self. Living mindfully entails living daily life without pretense and without concern that others are judging one negatively. The person who lives mindfully is fully "in the moment" and is not worried about how he or she is coming across to others. Mindful individuals are truly authentic in that they are fully engaged with the environment and are busy noticing novel aspects of the situation, rather than devoting attentional resources toward winning the approval of others or toward bolstering fragile self-esteem. On the other hand, those who disengage with the moment and expend their attentional resources on impressing others or "putting up a good front" enter a mindless state. They begin to behave the way *others* think they should behave or the way they *think* others think they should behave in a given situation, thereby distancing themselves from their honest feelings and their ability to be in the moment and simply enjoy the situation. Whenever individuals respond to a situation in a scripted manner rather than a genuine manner, they close themselves off to other alternatives that may be more appropriate or fulfilling given the variations in the context of the situation. However, the costs of mindlessly pretending to be or feel something that is not authentic are great.

A large literature is devoted to the study of self-presentation and the pretenses in which people engage to enhance self-presentation. This research suggests that people use deceptive pretense about themselves in order to: (a) avoid criticism and loss of self-esteem (Roth, Snyder, & Pace, 1986), or (b) win praise and increase positive self-esteem (DePaulo, Kashy, Kirkendol, Wyer, & Epstein, 1996; Hussain & Langer, 2003). In situations where people feel that others will judge them negatively, they may be more likely to revert to mindlessly following a scripted response; however, the mindless response may ironically lead to the problem it is employed to prevent. Past research indicates that when people act in mindful ways rather than in scripted ways that are non-genuine, they are evaluated as more charismatic and authentic (Kawakami, White, & Langer, 2000; Langer, 1989). Further, when individuals are praised for behavior that is non-genuine, they may actually experience reduced self-esteem, because praise directed at their pretended behavior or qualities cannot be directed at what they *are*—only what they are *not* (Hussain & Langer, 2003). In a study of this phenomenon, Hussain and Langer (2003) measured state self-esteem in two groups of college undergraduates. One group then took a test which they could not complete without pretending to understand several vocabulary words that were in reality not words at all (e.g. the non-word "besionary"). The second group of students took a test in which no "pretending" to understand words was necessary. Upon completing the test, students from both groups received written praise for their performance and their verbal comprehension after which their state self-esteem was measured again. The group of students who received praise and who did not pretend to understand the vocabulary words recorded an increase in state self-esteem, while the group who "pretended" had an actual reduction in self-esteem. The authors concluded deceptive self-presentation not only failed to lead to enhanced self-esteem, but also reduced the opportunity for benefiting from positive evaluation. In other words, when subjects were being praised for something that was not authentic about themselves, not only could they not benefit from the praise but they actually felt worse about themselves than if they had not received the praise at all.

There are situations, however, where manipulating self-presentation can be mindful and beneficial. In some instances, purposely acting "as if" one is somehow different than he or she actually is can lead to self-improvement. For instance, a person can mindfully act as a role

model for herself. This can be a very beneficial technique for changing a bad habit or trait. The individual who desires to quit smoking, for example, can choose to act as if she is a non-smoker for a day and try to respond to situations in a way that non-smokers would respond. The more she pretends that she is a non-smoker and has the emotional experience of being a non-smoker, the more likely the role-playing is to become a self-fulfilling prophesy. This type of "pretending" behavior is not, however, an attempt to make one appear to be something one is not in order to receive the positive evaluation of others; rather, it is a mindful technique to change current experience in an effort to improve future behavior and experience.

In conclusion, being authentic precludes worry about being negatively evaluated. One is not worried about the "right" response. The authentic individual is living mindfully, engaged in the experience of the moment rather than in attempts to enhance his or her perceived appearance. Individuals can then authentically accept themselves without the negative kickbacks that accompany the undeserved praise of others.

THE TYRANNY OF EVALUATION

Another important aspect of self-acceptance is appropriate self-evaluation. Each person has a set of experiences and memories that is unique. Perception is colored by these experiences and memories, and, therefore, no two people will perceive the same object or the same situation in identical ways: each *sees* the "same" thing differently. However, one may believe—mistakenly—that there exists some objective reality, and this presumption leads him or her to believe in the existence of objective evaluation (Langer, 2005). Despite evidence that others form their evaluations based on their own needs and past experiences, the tendency is to think that others' evaluations are objective. One may therefore mindlessly incorporate others' evaluations of him- or herself as "Truth," and, again mindlessly, form self-evaluations based on this mindless information.

While evaluation is central to the way individuals make sense of themselves and their world, all too often they form these evaluations mindlessly. In theory, they pay lip service to the idea that there are good points and bad points to each aspect of themselves depending upon the situation, yet, in practice, they tend to see each of their traits as "good" or "bad," depending upon how others categorize these

traits. They forget that they have the choice of deciding how to view each of their own traits. For example, others may brand an individual as *impulsive*; the individual can choose that evaluation or he can choose to see himself as *spontaneous*. He might also choose to see himself as *private* vs. *secretive*, as *serious* vs. *grim*, or as *flexible* vs. *unpredictable* (Langer, 1989, 2005).

It is also possible to look at each personal behavior as positive or negative, depending upon present circumstances. For example, instead of condemning his lack of will-power after eating a hot fudge sundae, a mindful individual might reframe the experience as a beneficial decision to treat himself to delicious ice cream at a time when he needed a psychological lift. Eating the hot fudge sundae made perfect sense at the time he did it, and he made the decision to eat it based on circumstances that were different than the circumstances that exist at the time he is negatively evaluating that decision. Each behavior made sense at the time it occurred. In fact, *all behavior makes sense from the actor's perspective or the actor wouldn't do it* (Langer, 2005). Realizing that all behavior makes sense on some level allows one to hold as suspect the negative evaluations others make of his or her behavior, as well as negative evaluations one makes of one's own behavior. This is not to say that people should make a habit of justifying outrageous behavior, but rather that they understand there are multiple perspectives from which to view any act. Self-evaluation—positive or negative—is a choice each person makes, and they can choose to change the evaluation of any behavior according to context (Langer, 1989, 2005). When they realize that they have the choice of multiple perspectives on their own behavior, they are able to accept even those actions that caused pain and that they may choose not to repeat in the future.

THE MINDFULNESS OF MISTAKES

One of the principal roadblocks to self-acceptance is the inability to accept past mistakes, real or perceived. Each mistake from the past, however, when perceived mindfully, can be considered from either a positive or a negative perspective. Good mistakes are those from which one can learn something of value. Bad mistakes are those that one doesn't want to face. In fact, every mistake has its lesson and its potential for growth when examined from the appropriate perspective. There is an old maxim that says "If you're not making mistakes,

you're not trying hard enough." In fact, making mistakes is an indicator that one is willing to engage with the environment and try things even when the outcome is uncertain (Langer, 2005). The mindful approach to past mistakes is to look at them from multiple perspectives and find the perspective that provides either new knowledge, motivation for change, and/or an opportunity to teach others a valuable lesson. For example, Thomas Edison made literally thousands of mistakes as he sought to create the electric light bulb. The Wright brothers, likewise, sustained many failures in their attempt to create controlled and sustained flight. Mistakes can also be life-changing events. They can motivate individuals to change direction in their lives and get off a self-injurious path. Finally, mistakes can be perceived as potentially educational and life-changing for others, even when the individual who made the mistake must pay a continual price for the transgression. The controversial documentary *Scared Straight* depicts inmates of the Rahway State Prison's "Lifer's Program" in New Jersey, using their mistakes to dissuade young delinquents from a life of crime (Shapiro, 2003). Although they could not undo the mistakes that sent them to prison for life, each prisoner who participated in the program could use their mistakes mindfully to help at-risk youths to avoid the same mistakes. Perceiving mistakes from a mindful perspective allows people to see the "silver lining" and to accept their actions as potentially growth-enhancing.

A second difficulty with mistakes that may impact self-acceptance is the inability to act in the present for fear of making a mistake. In one recently completed study, Ellen Langer and her colleagues tested this phenomenon. One group of subjects was asked to imagine they had mistakenly broken their only coffee cup and a second group was asked to imagine that the coffee cup had been broken beforehand. Both groups were asked how they would go about getting coffee. Those who were allowed to accept the broken cup as a fait accompli, without having to deal with it as a mistake they had made, came up with more creative solutions for the problem than those in the "mistake" group. Further, several in the mistake group gave up and said they would forego the coffee altogether while those who did not view the broken cup as a mistake continued to envision solutions to the problem (Langer, Steshenko, & Cummings, in preparation).

Mistakes are signals that the individual went off a predetermined course. A predetermined course, however, is based on navigating through a static world based on preconceived notions of how the

world "is." The world is always changing despite attempts to hold it still and force it into preconceived expectations. Because no one can predict exactly how the world will change, people are bound to make mistakes when they try to hold the world constant. Going off course is not always a negative thing, and it can present choices and lessons that may not have otherwise have been recognized. Making mistakes, then, forces people to think mindfully about the present and to update their notions of the changing world.

Many scientific discoveries were made possible by errors or mistakes. The discovery of penicillin resulted from a mistake, as Alexander Fleming made the mistake of leaving a culture plate of Staphylococcus bacteria uncovered while he went on a 2-week vacation. During his absence a spore of a rare variant called Penicillium notatum floated onto the plate from a lab on the floor below Fleming's. Fortunately, Fleming, rather than discarding the contaminated culture, noticed that the bacteria was growing everywhere but where the errant spore had settled (Ho, 1999). If Fleming had been in a mindless state, he might have chided himself for leaving the culture exposed, thrown it away in disgust, and the world would not have benefited from one of the most fortuitous discoveries of the twentieth century. When people allow themselves to investigate their mistakes and see what mistakes have to teach them, they think mindfully about themselves and their world, and they increase their ability not only to accept themselves and their mistakes but to be grateful for their mistakes as directions for future growth.

THE MINDLESSNESS OF SOCIAL COMPARISONS

Along with great advances in medicine, technology, and communication, the modern world presents unparalleled opportunities for unfavorable social comparison. Rather than being surrounded by extended family members of past generations who offered encouragement and support, most people today are surrounded by images of gorgeous bodies and superhuman athletes that arrive constantly through the media of television, video, the internet, and glossy magazines. Research has shown that repeated exposure to images of people who are more attractive than oneself or more successful than oneself can have a negative effect on self-concept and self-esteem (Gutierres, Kenrick, & Partch, 1999). Mindless comparison to the

near-perfect images presented by media can lead to feelings of personal inadequacy.

Self-esteem and self-acceptance can also be injured by comparison to one's peers. In another study conducted in Ellen Langer's lab at Harvard, men and women aged 18–52 were asked how often they compared themselves with others on a wide variety of attributes including attractiveness, intelligence, wealth, and personality. They were also given measures of negative affect. Those who engaged in less frequent social comparisons reported less guilt, regret, and blame (White, Langer, Yuriv, & Welch, in press), while those who reported comparing themselves to others more often also reported more guilt, regret and blame.

Social comparison can be demoralizing, even to the individuals who come out on top in the comparison. In a follow-up to the above study, police officers were asked whether the average police officer was superior to the average security guard. Those who reported the highest levels of evaluation, even though they were positively comparing their own profession to another profession, scored lower on measures of self-esteem and satisfaction with life (White, et al., in press). The problem is that once individuals start comparing themselves to others and taking satisfaction in the comparisons, they may begin to mindlessly base part of their self-worth on those comparisons. This, of course, may lead them to be more susceptible to the detrimental effects of negative comparisons when they arise.

This is not to say that all social comparison is mindless and detrimental. There is some evidence that the effect of comparison can be either demoralizing or inspirational, depending upon the type of comparison made. Penelope Lockwood and Ziva Kunda found that when the accomplishments of others seem attainable, they may be inspiring; however, when people compare themselves to those whose accomplishments seem unattainable, the comparisons have an undermining effect (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997).

When many people compare themselves to others, they tend to focus on outcome rather than on process. For example, if a student visits a professor in his office and the professor uses a word that the student does not understand, the student may feel intimidated and somewhat stupid. However, when she approaches her feelings of inferiority mindfully, the student may realize that the professor at one time did not know that word either and had to look it up. The student will also realize that she has the same opportunity to learn new words

by the same method, and therefore is not stupid or inferior, but is simply a person who has not had the occasion to look up this word yet. Focusing on the *process*, rather than the outcome involved in becoming an expert, reduces the negative effect of social comparison.

It can, of course, be a mindful experience to compare one's performance or specific action to that of others; it can be instructional to see what others did to make their performance superior. However, it is mindless to base self-worth on comparison to others; when self-acceptance is based on the need to be better than others (or at least "as good as" others), individuals will come away disappointed because there will always be others who are more attractive or more intelligent or more athletic than they are. Employing a mindful perspective, however, allows them to see that the qualities or possessions of others do not diminish their own worth as individuals.

THE TRAP OF RIGID CATEGORIES

Humans experience the world by creating categories and making distinctions among them. The creation of new, fluid categories is a mindful activity (Langer, 1989). Mindlessness sets in when people rely too rigidly on categories and distinctions created in the past. Not only does the world continually offer opportunities to create new categories, it also demands reformulation and change of present categories of how the world is. For instance, the categories of "male activities" and "female activities" have changed in the past four decades. Elderly persons, who may have learned rigid categorizations of gender roles a generation ago, risk being continually distressed over today's youth if they are unable to alter their categorizations.

Many people tend to pigeonhole their own self-image into a rigid category. Many people see themselves, not as individuals with innate self-worth, but as a wealthy person, a beautiful person, an athlete, or an elderly person. Self-categorization based on accomplishments, jobs, possessions, or age is narrow and limiting. A woman, for example, who has a narrow self-image may accept herself as "Mr. Smith's wife." She may manage "his" house, cook "his" meals, and buy clothes for herself that he will like. However, if Mr. Smith should decide to pack his bags and leave, this woman would have a crisis of self-acceptance. Having categorized herself within the narrow boundaries of "wife," she would be left without an identity. Many persons in high-status professions also suffer from narrow self-categorization

based solely on their professional identity. Professional athletes, who lose their career status due to injury or age-related factors, may have a difficult time accepting themselves as a "non-athlete" if they have categorized themselves based on this single dimension of identity.

In fact, everyone has many facets of self; people may miss the richness of their own existence and potential if they narrowly categorize themselves or others. In the example above, Mrs. Smith is a far more complex and interesting person than she realizes. Other than wife, she may be a daughter, mother, pet-owner, amateur pianist, lover of novels, expert gardener, and good friend. When she views herself mindfully rather than rigidly in a narrow role, her self-image becomes rich and full of possibilities.

THE DECISION TO ACCEPT OURSELVES

Decision-making is relevant to all aspects of life, yet many individuals move through each day without recognizing the alternatives they have and actively deciding among them. They fail to realize that the world they create for themselves is the sum of the choices they make. If they are unhappy with their world, they can choose to make other choices. Accepting responsibility for one's private world is part of self-acceptance. Change is possible only when one mindfully embraces both the responsibilities and the opportunities of the decisions they have made. All too often people feel they have no choice in their present situation, whereas others, although no different except for mindful outlook, realize that they shape their own world (Langer, 2005).

Many people have no confidence in themselves as good decision-makers. They ask others for advice, thus robbing themselves of the benefit of feeling in control of their lives, oblivious to the fact that they actively made the decision of whether to take the advice of others. This is not to say that people should never ask others for advice, but they must realize that the decision is still theirs not the advice-givers.

When individuals realize that they have control over their own lives, they feel more "ownership" of their lives. Their sense of responsibility is enhanced. They are able to mindfully reframe past experience and mistakes, and they are able to see possibilities for change and improvement. In short, when individuals take control of their lives in a mindful way, they are able to accept both past and present

circumstances of their lives. They realize that they have the ability to see their own lives from many perspectives, and that they may change that perspective depending upon the current context. When people are mindful in this way, they can unconditionally accept themselves.

TECHNIQUES FOR ENHANCING MINDFUL SELF-ACCEPTANCE

The following list of techniques for increasing mindfulness is adapted from previous work reported for use in primary care therapeutic settings (Carson & Langer, 2004). These techniques are simple, easy to incorporate into daily life, and are geared toward enhancing self-acceptance.

(1) *Actively observe novel distinctions.* The act of observing new distinctions increases positive affect and also increases interest in the event, object, behavior, or situation (Langer & Pietrasz, 1995). Actively noticing new things in the environment (or actively noticing new aspects of things previously taken for granted) is a hallmark of mindful thinking. As active mental exploration becomes a way of life, it becomes easier to explore those aspects of self that have previously been kept hidden or avoided. Active exploration is judgment-free; as individuals continue to actively explore new aspects of self, they will enhance self-acceptance.

(2) *Think of yourself as a "work in progress."* When one thinks of oneself in rigid immutable terms (e.g. "I am no good at math" or "I am not attractive") he or she becomes mindless and paves the way for self-fulfilling prophesy. Studies in Ellen Langer's lab indicated that when rigid words such as "is" and "am" were replaced with "may be" and "could be," participants responded with increased production and creativity (see Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000, for a review). Individuals can replace rigid words with possibility words in their self-narratives. The very act of replacing the certainty of convictions with the possibility that things "may be" true opens up the possibility that things *may not be* as one currently interprets them. This, in turn, creates a mindset open to personal change and acceptance.

(3) *Contemplate puzzles and paradoxes.* Life is full of paradoxes. For example, individuals may both love and hate their parents or their bodies. They may at once feel victimized by—yet responsible for—an illness or a seemingly intolerable situation. Actively thinking about paradoxes increases one's ability to tolerate ambiguity (and

decreases the anxiety associated with uncertainty). Increased toler-
ance of ambiguity is another hallmark of mindfulness. The contem-
plation of paradoxes (example: the healing but destructive
properties of time) allows one to accept paradox within him- or her-
self and leads to self-acceptance.

(4) *Add humor to the situation.* Humor itself relies on mindfulness by
forcing people to see a new and unexpected side to a given situa-
tion. (This is why a joke already heard and remembered, without
being newly considered, is rarely funny.) When individuals notice
humorous aspects of themselves or their situation, they are more
likely to accept those aspects.

(5) *View the situation from multiple perspectives.* When people are
stuck in a rigid interpretation of their situation, they are less likely
to be accepting of it. One way to become more mindful is to try to
view problems from the perspective of different individuals. This
may include the perspective of others involved in the situation
(and, if appropriate, the humorous perspective of fictional observ-
ers, such as a dentist or a hairdresser).

(6) *Consider alternative understandings of problematic aspects of your-
self.* How many ways can a "negative" aspect of self be viewed as
useful? In what contexts could the problematic factor be considered
beneficial? All problems can be seen as useful in some contexts.
Viewing purported negative aspects of oneself or one's life as hav-
ing a silver lining may serve to increase self-acceptance. The differ-
ence between an ordeal and an adventure may be in how one looks
at it.

(7) *Keep a catalog of moments of joy.* The catalog can be written
descriptions of joyful moments, photographs, or simply a mental file
of memories that are easily accessible. Keep the catalog handy and
open it often. A growing body of research indicates that an increase
in positive mental state, even a mild increase such as one experi-
ences from remembering positive events, markedly influences men-
tal flexibility and creative problem solving (Langer, Janis, &
Wolfer, 1975; also see Isen, 2000 for a review). The accumulation of
moments of joy helps one to be accepting and grateful for his or her
experiences.

(8) *Start a "mindfulness" journal.* Make a point to begin or end each
day by writing down the significant events of the day. Look back on
the events with the purpose of observing new things and new per-
spectives about them. Practice at mindfully viewing events and sit-
uations in retrospect will enhance the ability to mindfully
experience events and situations at the time they occur. Keeping a
journal also helps individuals to observe continuity and direction in
their lives, enhancing self-acceptance.

CONCLUSIONS

This article has examined some of the basic tenets of mindfulness theory as they apply to self-acceptance. In order to truly accept themselves, individuals must be authentic. When people are mindful, they are actively engaged in drawing novel distinctions about the environment rather than manipulating their image in order to gain the positive evaluation of others or to maintain a fragile self-esteem. When people are actively noticing their environment, they are living authentically in the moment. This article has also suggested that when individuals mindlessly accept others' opinions of themselves as objective, they will have difficulty accepting themselves. Others' evaluations may be based on their own needs and experiences and not upon objective "Truth." How individuals see themselves is as valid as how others see them. This article has also suggested that the mistakes one may have made are not necessarily negative. Mistakes provide opportunities for learning, motivation for change, and a means to educate others. One can choose to view his or her mistakes from a positive perspective and thus accept them more easily. Further, rigid and narrow categorization can trap people into mindlessly viewing themselves based on their accomplishments, their professions, or their possessions. When they view themselves mindfully, they see that they are multifaceted individuals whose potential is limited only by their limited perspectives. Finally, this article has suggested that self-acceptance is a *mindful* decision that individuals make when they take responsibility for their lives and realize that they are in control of the decisions that create their personal world. When they view the world and themselves mindfully, they are able to accept themselves unconditionally.

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