

Answer the Bell

By Tim Buckley

There are some days I sit in front of my desk for six hours without once standing up and stretching. Likewise, I will go for hours without taking a drink of water from a glass full sitting right beside me.

One of my phone apps is a “mindfulness” prompt, a bell that rings randomly throughout the day, a reminder to stop everything, to breathe, to clear my mind of thoughts, and to recenter my energy. I have that app turned off.

Even though I know about the value of short pauses and mindfulness, I ignore that practice. Why? Because once I’m “on a roll” or in a “zone,” I am meeting needs...perhaps efficiency or following through with an agreement to finish something.

In the process, however, I’m not meeting needs for physical wellbeing. Without physical movement, I am not ridding my body of toxins. My joints stiffen and my lower legs get heavier with excess blood, water and lymph fluids. Moreover, my prolonged focus often puts me in a mood where I react with impatience at any interruption.

In NVC, we frequently hear that meeting needs is important. What happens though, when there are multiple needs in play at the same time? If I’m meeting a need to finish something on a deadline, and I’m ignoring needs for exercise and hydration, is that healthy?

What can I do to intervene in that process, to make sure that meeting one need doesn’t obstruct other needs to the detriment of my health or someone else’s?

Having the capacity to “change my mind” is healthy. Doing so is a way to keep my cognitive and emotional spheres connected. It allows me more opportunity to switch off my thinking and be open to hearing others. It reduces my tendency for impulsivity and stubbornness. It

increases my flexibility to other strategies to meet my own and others' needs.

So, actually, the phone's mindfulness app is a good idea for me. I feel some ease putting trust in that machine to call my attention. And, if I have the commitment to heed that invitation, I will put aside what I'm doing for a few minutes, to breathe, clear my mind, and focus elsewhere. Having a reminder like the phone app means I don't have to be constantly aware of my competing needs.

Perhaps, with enough practice, I won't need the phone to remind me. If my intention is for more clarity and awareness moment to moment, my mouth will alert me to my thirst, my sore butt will remind me to get up and move, and a request from my wife will remind me to refocus my attention elsewhere for a short time.

Then, so the theory goes, when I return to my desk, my work, I will quickly pick up where I left off with more resources...a refreshed body and an open mind.