

Reply to commentaries on *A Preliminary Inquiry on Rosen Method and Mindfulness: What We Notice* (*Rosen Method International Journal*, 7, Issue 1, pp. 49-62)

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The following response represents the ideas of co-authors Carol Cober and Jeanie C. Williams, who share a particular interest in the aspects of mindfulness research on creativity, as well as curiosity about the use of creative and expressive arts among Rosen Method practitioners. We would like to thank Jan Walker and Julia Cousins for their provocative comments about our informal study of Rosen Method and mindfulness and appreciate the thought that went into both responses.

Meditation and mindfulness practices in America currently represent a wide range of approaches that are applied in multiple professional settings with a diverse range of clients. Some meditation and mindfulness approaches are affiliated with religious practices while others are taught more as a form of awareness training. Mindfulness practices and applications are turning out to be profoundly useful for educators and therapists and, as our study suggests, as a framework and resource among many Rosen Method practitioners.

The results of our study described some of the observations and experiences of a small group of Rosen Method practitioners who also practice mindfulness meditation. Those we interviewed represent some with long-standing practices in Eastern mindfulness and meditation practices, and others who also study and practice Western contemplative practices or are involved in some type of creative arts practice.

Our study found that practicing mindfulness was identified as a central spiritual lifeline among many of the practitioners we interviewed; most of whom had already established a meditation practice prior to beginning their training in Rosen Method. Many of the practitioners we interviewed brought this mindfulness approach with them as they commenced their Rosen Method training and continued the practice throughout their professional lives.

As we reflect more on the connection between mindfulness and Rosen Method, all three of the co-authors of the mindfulness article wonder if some of the benefits received from a Rosen Method session (either movement or bodywork) might be dependent upon one's cultural perspective and other professional affiliations and trainings, and we hope to further explore this dialogue. Whether in movement groups or

bodywork dyads, the Rosen experience seems to lift the veil of separation between self and others, and this has piqued our curiosity further.

Rosen Method practitioners who are also trained in a psychotherapy or psychological counseling discipline have seen the huge impact of mindfulness research and multiple clinical applications over the last decade. In psychotherapy, the popularity and effectiveness of Jon Kabat Zinn's mindfulness-based cognitive therapy approach has applied mindfulness resources as an educational tool offered separate from a religious context. In Great Britain for example, therapist and authors Mark Williams and Danny Penman (2011) note that: "Mindfulness is simply a method of mental training. Many people who practice mindfulness are themselves religious, but then again, many atheists and agnostics are avid meditators too (p. 6)"

A wide range of applications of mindfulness and related contemplative practices are also used in higher education, and in high school and elementary school settings to enhance teaching and learning using non-religious forms of mindfulness instruction. Very often the study of contemplative practices that teach introspection, reflection, mindful listening, and awareness, guide the teacher to embody qualities of a more mindful presence. This allows the teacher to model mindfulness while inviting activities that can introduce personal reflection and integration for the students in the classroom. As Dan Goleman (2013) notes in his recent book *Focus: The Hidden Driver of Excellence*, mindfulness training has been identified as a successful tool to teach improved attention and social emotional learning in many classrooms. He notes that teachers have seen a natural synergy between social emotional learning and mindfulness training. He interviewed educator Linda Lanteieri, who notes that she sees "quicker embodiment of calming ability and the readiness to learn among students who are taught mindfulness." Contemplative practices have also been a useful resource in higher education settings and in guiding students to think more deeply and reflectively across a variety of professional disciplines (Barbezat & Bush, 2014.)

This broadening movement to embrace the applications of a range of contemplative and mindfulness practices might be a useful framework to examine among our community of Rosen Method practitioners—which includes those who practice as ministers in Christian traditions, Catholic nuns, Buddhists, Yoga devotees, Pagans, and those unaffiliated with any religious community whatsoever. With the increase of mindfulness and contemplative practices in professional training programs, we wonder about the applicability of including some aspect of mindfulness practice in Rosen training settings, or at the very least, offering information about research on these practices or, as continuing education for practitioners.

Both of us have long-standing practices in artistic disciplines (writing, poetry, acting, and visual arts). We are particularly interested in the research of Ellen Langer on mindfulness and creativity (Langer, 2005). Her research on mindfulness has examined the ways creative practices from various artistic paths can lead to mindful states. This distinct branch of mindfulness research calls for additional examination within our Rosen Method community, particularly in terms of movement and, as used for those practitioners and clients who are practicing artists. This line of study, beautifully articulated in the work of Langer, is another example of mindfulness that is separate from religion (See Ellen Langer's *On Becoming an Artist*, 2005).

Becoming familiar with this background research is important for Rosen Method practitioners so that we might recognize a broader base for how our "hands on work" can support the learning that arises from mindful states. Our work as Rosen Method practitioners is about embodied self-awareness. Alan Fogel offers that the final stage of restorative embodied self-awareness is about letting go, of surrender, and describes "This type of surrender, of letting go, is often classified under the domain of spiritual work. Many religious traditions emphasize acceptance, forgiveness, compassion (or loving-kindness) and gratitude as

key ingredients in spiritual work” (Fogel, 2013, p. 276). Fogel goes on to describe the importance of play and creativity, the ability to be immersed in the moment, and notes, “this is certainly the case of the embodied self-awareness practitioner whose personal explorations of the light and shadow of his or her own experiences make it possible for clients and students to grow into similar realms within themselves. It is also true of artists who illuminate human nature by exposing their own” (p. 277).

This exploration of the intersection of the embodied self-awareness aspects of Rosen Method with a range of mindfulness and creativity research intrigues both of us. As Rosen Method practitioners who meditate and have long-standing creative (arts) practices, we are curious to examine how creative practices contribute to our Rosen work. We feel it is an important line of inquiry and have begun exploration of a deeper examination of this in future interviews with Rosen Method practitioners across the globe. Stay tuned!

References

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