Wholeheartedness, by Brother David

The end -- in all of the monastic traditions, of both East and West -- consists in cultivating mindfulness, being mindful. And "mindful" may be a little misleading, because it sounds a bit much like mind-over-body, but it has nothing to do with mind over or against body. I think "wholeheartedness" is the English word that expresses better what mindfulness as a technical term means; that you respond to every situation from your center, from your heart -- that you listen with your heart to every situation, and your heart elicits the response.

If you're really mind-full, and if you underline that aspect of fullness, wholeness, or wholeheartedness, it reveals the gift character of everything. A partial view often misses the gift character of things. The full view consists of seeing each situation as purely gratis, and if you get that in mind, then your response is gratefulness.

That would be my practice: to try to live gratefully. Sometimes gratefulness has a passive connotation: You sit back and say thanks or something like that. Well, again, that's not grate-fullness. The fullness shows itself when you realize that the gift within every gift is opportunity -- mostly the opportunity to enjoy.

We have thousands of opportunities every day to be grateful: for having good weather, to be able to sit in such a beautiful room on such comfortable furniture, to have slept well last night, to be able to get up, to be healthy, to have enough to eat. When you begin to think about just those most basic and obvious things, then you begin to think of the other people who don't have any of this -- of the people who are blind, who are lame, who are sick in bed, who are dying. But even before you start that, you should learn to enjoy those things which you have and be grateful. There's opportunity upon opportunity to be grateful; that's what life is.

--Brother David Steindl-Rast
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