



Mindful America: The Mutual Transformation of Buddhist Meditation and American Culture

Jeff Wilson

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Thirty years ago, "mindfulness" was a Buddhist principle mostly obscure to the west. Today, it is a popular cure-all for Americans' daily problems. A massive and lucrative industry promotes mindfulness in every aspect of life, however mundane or unlikely: Americans of various faiths (or none at all) practice mindful eating, mindful sex, mindful parenting, mindfulness in the office, mindful sports, mindfulness-based stress relief and addiction recovery, and hire mindful divorce lawyers. Mindfulness is touted by members of Congress, CEOs, and Silicon Valley tech gurus, and is even being taught in public schools, hospitals, and the military.

Focusing on such processes as the marketing, medicalization, and professionalization of meditation, Jeff Wilson reveals how Buddhism shed its countercultural image and was assimilated into mainstream American culture. The rise of mindfulness in America, Wilson argues, is a perfect example of how Buddhism enters new cultures and is domesticated: in each case, the new cultures take from Buddhism what they believe will relieve their specific distresses and concerns, and in the process create new forms of Buddhism adapted to their needs. Wilson also tackles the economics of the mindfulness movement, examining commercial programs, therapeutic services, and products such as books, films, CDs, and even smartphone applications.

Mindful America is the first in-depth study of this phenomenon--invaluable for understanding how mindfulness came to be applied to such a vast array of non-religious concerns and how it can be reconciled with traditional Buddhism in America.

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