

Practice Note: “Don’t Know” Mantra

Transcribed and edited from a short talk by Gil Fronsdal on May 4, 2011

Here’s a suggestion for practicing this morning. I think that for many people, one of the common challenges around meditation is your own thinking – getting caught up in, or pulled off in the world of your thoughts. It’s a common movement in meditation to let go of your thoughts and start on the breath again, or some other way of relating to it differently. That can be effective sometimes, especially cumulatively – just letting go and coming back.

But sometimes it’s useful to have a trick to help you disengage from the allure, the pull, and the force of thinking. I want to offer you a little mantra that you can use when you’re thinking a lot. It can help to pull you away from it, and to not be so glued onto it – to be willing to step back and open your mind broader or wider than it sometimes is when it’s locked in to a particular thought. So when you recognize that you’re thinking, add to that thought, maybe at the end of the sentence, the mantra: “Don’t know.”

When you’re pulled into the world of thoughts – and even if you’re confused about things – there’s a feeling of: “This is true.” “This is important.” “This is how things are.” Or, “My judgments are true.” But just add, “I don’t know. Maybe, maybe not, I don’t know.” This can often pull the rug out from underneath that which gives thoughts the authority to grab us and hold onto us.

So you might experiment this morning to see if salting your meditation with the phrase “Don’t know” frees you a little bit from that world of thinking. I hope you enjoy your morning here. Thank you.