

Practice Note: Practicing Contentment

Transcribed and edited from a short talk by Gil Fronsdal on October 26, 2011

In terms of practice, one of the important supports for mindfulness – which sets a context for it and makes it easier to be in the present moment – is to be content. There is both wise and unwise contentment. But there has to be some kind of contentment that helps support us. We're content to be here and to practice mindfulness. We're not caught up with the idea that the grass is greener somewhere else. We're not caught with ideas that things are so bad for us that we can't practice, that this is hopeless, or we're so restless because we're caught up in desires and discontent.

As you sit here and practice this morning, you might look at whether there is some healthy, appropriate way to use the experience, feeling and attitude of contentment: to be content to be here today, content to be practicing with the challenges you have if you have challenges, or content to be practicing with the joys if there are joys as your practice, and content with the level of concentration and mindfulness you have – as opposed to being discontented with how poor your concentration and mindfulness are. You can be content with knowing that you're practicing or in training to develop and grow it, rather than being discontented with how you feel about yourself. You can be content that you're on a path to clarify and settle that, and to come to peace.

There are many ways to find contentment. But, if there is some sense of being here and being content with this situation here and now, then it's a lot easier for the mind to settle, to be willing to be here, to practice and be mindful. So, if that's interesting for you, I encourage you to explore contentment as you walk and sit to the degree it helps you to be quieter, stiller, and more engaged here and now – but not so much that you're involved in more and more thoughts.

If this exercise to explore contentment reveals that you're totally discontented, that's good too, so that you discover and see it. Then, what you might do is to bring mindfulness to your discontent and see what's going on there in some deeper way. Hopefully you will be very contented to explore your discontent.

Thank you.