

# Practice Note: The Wow Factor

Transcribed and edited from a short talk by Gil Fronsdal on February 15, 2012

Mindfulness practice is meant to be an antidote to being caught up in things – caught up in the mind, preoccupied. I think all of you know how easy it is for the mind to be very strongly pulled into the worlds of our concerns, our preoccupations, our fantasies, our thoughts and images. You might let go for a moment but then go right back in, or you can't even let go because the churning of the mind is so strong.

Sometimes when people are mindful of how caught up they are in thoughts and concerns, their mindfulness is not very strong. It's almost like a checklist, "Well I'm thinking." Then they merrily go along thinking. Or they kind of keep thinking that they are mindful, they're kind of with their breath; but in the background is all this thinking is still going on because it's not really acknowledged.

Part of the art of mindfulness practice is to have mindfulness that is clear and strong – a full acknowledgement of something. It's a bit like standing on both feet: you're independent; you're standing on your own two feet; you're stable, looking at something, and you clearly see it. It's not like you're glancing at it sideways: "Oh, there it is," and kind of pushing it away. It's almost as if you turn towards it: "I see it. This is what I see." You are with the breathing; you are really there. If your mind is caught up in thoughts, you acknowledge that. You take a moment to really see, "Oh, this is what's happening! I'm thinking." There's a clear, full acknowledgement. In that full acknowledgement, you're stepping back and are not lost in the experience, not caught quite as much.

That's the background for what I'm going to say now. This is pretty standard; I've said these things before. I might also have said what I'm going to say next, but I still think it's good.

When you do this full acknowledgement that helps you fully recognize thinking, to help disentangle, to not be so caught in what you are thinking about, I find it helpful to have a particular perspective. I call it the Wow perspective, Wow understanding: "Wow, amazing!" Amazing that a human mind should be thinking about anything at all. Isn't it amazing that there are thoughts in this universe? How did this happen? Out of the Big Bang, a few billion years later, and: "Wow, there's this person who's thinking, or a person who has feelings, or there's someone blowing the leaf blower, and not only that but there's this capacity to hear it and be annoyed! Isn't that amazing? Wow!" I think that if somehow you can get to the Wow, then chances are that you're not entangled. You step back a little and get a bird's eye view of it all.

Again, if you do the Wow thing, the art of mindfulness is to do it in a way that doesn't spin you out into more thoughts. Do it in a way that silences the mind, that quiets the mind, as if you are seeing one of the great wonders of the universe, and you are just silenced by it. Wow! It would be amazing if you look at your own mind and that's what happens. Wow! And you're there, just there with it.

Maybe that's interesting today. You can experiment with 'wowness.' If there's nothing worth being amazed by in your experience this morning, then just do your practice matter-of-factly. Thank you.