

Practice Note: Noticing Peace

Transcribed and edited from a short talk by Gil Fronsdal on May 2, 2012

For the rest of this morning it may be interesting for you to consider noticing something that may be unfamiliar. Many years ago, I was told about some young people from New York City who were taken to the tropical jungles of Central America to go on nature walks. Their guide had grown up in the jungle, and would point to birds and animals that were standing out in highlight for him. The young people couldn't see anything. They couldn't see the parrots or other birds because they were unfamiliar with the jungle, and didn't know how to see or to pick out different things because it was such a foreign world for them. I'm sure that if you took teenagers who grew up in the jungle and brought them to New York City, they too would miss a lot of things that New York teenagers would pick up.

There is a lot going on, and we're not necessarily picking up everything that's happening to us or that's going on. Our attention is a selective process based on what we've been conditioned to pay attention to – or what we think is important to pay attention to. Because of that selective process, we might be missing things.

It's possible, perhaps, to train yourself to notice things that you've been missing or not paying much attention to. These things are there, waiting for you to notice them. What I'd like to suggest for today is that you notice peace.

There's always peace here and now. There's always peacefulness, tranquility, or calmness here, even if you're not familiar with noticing it. If what you're familiar with noticing is your concerns, thoughts, emotions, stories, and dramas of your life, then you might not notice that in the cracks of those thoughts, in the background of your emotional life, there's peace.

In this next period, you might see if you can peacefully notice the peace that's here. See how you would notice the peace, or what you'd notice as peaceful. Perhaps, you might feel it externally. Maybe you feel that this room is peaceful, even though there are leaf blowers outside.

There are many areas where you can look for peace. But the place that makes the most difference to find peace, stillness, calm, tranquility is in your mind, your heart, or your awareness.

Is there something in the nature of being aware, in the nature of the heart or the mind itself, that no matter how agitated you might actually be (not to deny the agitation, or to override it, or push it away), there in the midst of it, around it, above it, containing it, is some kind of peace you can taste or get a sense of? Maybe not dramatically, but a little bit.

I hope you enjoy your morning. Thank you.