

2014-05-14 Refocusing To Present

Sat, 9/12 3:39PM • 11:42

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

impulses, impulse control, breath, confidence, article, fantasy, mind, learning, develop, happening, freedom, self esteem, cultivate, zen, new york times, grounding, coming, delayed gratification, grounded, distracted

SPEAKERS

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I want to say a little bit more about with what I said this morning earlier. I was in I appreciate it reading this article in The New York Times about the effectiveness of mindfulness training, and how mindfulness training, the simple act of focusing on something like the breath, noticing when the mind wanders off focus, and then bring the mind back to the breath. That it develops all kinds of psychological qualities of the mind that are very useful, and maybe very helpful, especially the articles about people have Attention Deficit Disorder, and also they talked about people when they get to start getting old and then one of the things that they happens as we get older is that the ability to avoid distracted thinking becomes less. That's why people get distracted easily. So that's quite partly why people get older have turned to our sometimes hard time remembering what they were, you know, remembering things, what they're talking about, or words or names or something, because they're so easily distracted. The article said I don't know if it's true.

So they said that the simple act of coming back noticing your distracting and come back will cultivate greater delayed strength and delayed gratification and that this is a really important principle or quality of psychological maturity is being able to manage with delayed gratification. Not to pursue your desire your wishes, automatically, just because you happen. It also was very good training in impulse control, a little bit similar. Where you have an impulse, you want to think something, you want to say something, you want to do something. But the task is to come back and just be with a breath. And so whatever the impulses that are otherwise happen, your training and impulse control, you're not giving into those impulses. And that is a very important thing that people have to learn to be successful in any kind of life. And as as children grow up, they're learning impulse control, when it's appropriate to act on certain impulses. I think if we gave freedom to everyone we know to be act freely, whatever impulse they have, you probably wouldn't have it very. Probably your life would get pretty complicated very quickly. So learning impulse control, and then learning to self monitor, learning to have a heightened ability to monitor oneself to be aware of one's thoughts. And feelings and attitudes and desires and wishes and what goes on is a very important part because without self monitoring, there can't be delayed gratification that can't be impulse control. And there can't be wisdom and understanding of what goes on and principles that we operate under. The there was a second article in The New York Times this week that my wife told me about that this week about confidence. And what they said was that developing confidence in yourself is not very effective. They've learned that similar with the self esteem movement in schools, there's a whole host time in this 80s and 90s of trying to inculcate self esteem in children. And they'd be horrified at the results that somehow there's a lot of lot of kids who grew up in the self esteem movement movement, who ended up feeling that it they deserved to have things be easy for them and Wasn't a sense that they should try hard. And there's something about building up self esteem, self confidence, where what's being is I'm confident I'm capable. The whole holding his eye

is not very effective was the researcher to find he could do this study report in New York Times. But rather, what's useful is to have confidence in one's ability, that one has an ability, one has a skill that one can apply and use, that confidence is useful. So the confidence itself is this a very broad, you know, vague idea that has a magnet for all kinds of other ideas, confidence in a skill that you have that's very particular. And that can be realistic, that can be something very focused. So in tying these two, two studies together, we can have confidence in our ability to not get caught up in our distractions not get caught up in our impulses, confidence not getting caught up in wanting what we want right away and that they have confidence in that makes it easier to go through the world because you know that you'll have impulses you have thoughts you have things you want to stay and things you want to do and attitudes for yourself. And you know, you don't have to worry so much because you know, you can step out of it, you can come back to the task at hand, come back. So in the in the article, you know, but mindfulness, it said, you know, just simple having a particular focus, coming back and focusing on that letting go and coming back. What I learned from Vipassana practice, so I did I did a lot of that in Zen practice. Come back, come back, come back to the breath, come back to the breath and posture and Zen and it was great for me. I really loved it, but I was a little bit fortunate because kind of before I started practicing Zen. I had an experience of summer, a very nice summer in my life, where I decided there was nothing wrong with having a fantasy of life. And so I gave free rein to my fantasies. But to do that, without any balance is dangerous you, they have institutions for you.

But what I did was, I happened to be I use coincidentally when I gave myself that freedom. I was doing something all summer long, where I constantly had to be in the present moment, be in the present moment, be in the present moment, outdoors kind of thing to be there. And so I had this wonderful combination of giving freedom to my mind and always being grounded in the present. And that kept me from going crazy with my fantasy psychedelic. So I gave this freedom, but I quit. I didn't go very far with it. But it was still it was free. I wasn't trying to control it. So when I started doing Zen practice, I kind of had brought the same attitude towards it, I gave freedom to my inner life to be what it is. It's okay whenever it's fine. But I constantly grounded myself in the breath and the posture. So I gave it when it was okay that I have thoughts and fantasies. But every few moments moment, I'd come back over here, here, here. So it was a wonderful combination as opposed to I can't do that I shouldn't be doing that being on guard against the bad mind doing whatever is gonna do. I had no idea it was bad. I just like, gave it its freedom. But I've constantly ground constant ground and kind of helped me relax, settle, get grounded. What the pastor did for me was that I realized that, that mindful that presence of connecting and not being caught in fantasy connecting to grounding in the present moment, I didn't have to only use the breath in the body. I could use whatever was happening. So I didn't have to turn away from anything to get the grounding. I could say turn towards something, whatever is happening. So if there was fantasy, I didn't have to turn away from the fantasy to wake up, there was a particular way of turning towards the fantasy. And seeing or this is fantasy that you know, it was kind of like stepping away from the distraction to look back at it. Rather than stepping away from it than going to the breath, it was turning away from it. And with the same kind of attention, which I grabbed myself in the breathing, there's a way of grounding myself and this is the mind thinking. Or if I had a strong emotion, same thing, rather than turning away from the mic, very effective sometimes turn away from the emotion and just ground in the breath, breath. If long as you give freedom to the emotions, if you try to squash it, that's not good. But in the same way with with your grounding in the breath, when there's a lot of emotions. I learned through vipassana that I could turn the mind away from being caught in the emotions and but at the same time ground myself in it or see it for what it is or really be there in a way that was free and not caught by it. So, the opportunity of developing and training the mind is not limited to only coming back to the breath only having a particular focus of concentration. But the opportunity to cultivate and develop the mind to develop these qualities have to use the articles, reference concepts to develop delayed gratification, impulse, impulse control, self monitoring, and maybe even a certain kind

of confidence can come from bringing a clear kind of mindfulness, clear recognition, or whatever is happening, and there's no need to turn away from anything. But that clear recognition to what's happening is very different than being swept away along with what's happening. Being involved with what's happening. It's really stepping back and seeing it for what it is. And to constantly do that movement over and over again, does a tremendous amount of good for our mind. And the article talks about certain set of things. But I think that there's a inner inner mental ecology is an ecosystem is so complex, that this very simple thing of not allowing yourself to get distracted, carried away by your distraction carried away by your impulses, I think it the Buddhist traditions, points it develops a tremendous amount of good in in oneself. And one of the ways my teacher in Burma, would word this this kind of the simple act of practice cultivates many different things. He said that, that simple act of coming back to the moment coming back to the breath, you are cultivating the whole of all factors of the Eightfold Path. And he would go through the four paths or dysentery syrup how just coming back to the breath Coming back to the moment was cultivating all the factors. So it's probably many other things as well.

So I hope that you will put tremendous value or appreciation of how simple how effective and multi faceted the usefulness of, of not allowing yourself to get distracted to notice when you start getting off and either coming back to the breath or waking up right there, seeing what it is. Thank you