

2014-11-05 Noticing And Changing The Thinking Mind

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SPEAKERS

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So one of the very useful areas to become mindful of, is our thinking. number of reasons for that one reason is that many people spend a lot of time thinking. And so it's good to get to know it. And to understand it. If thinking goes on, kind of unattended to, if we think without really being aware of what we're doing when we think our thinking sometimes will unduly influence our lives, and all kinds of problems can happen. for meditation. Thinking is the thing that most often takes people away from the present moment makes it hard to be present. And so learning a wise relationship to thinking learning the territory Your thinking can be very useful. Sometimes when meditation instructions are given, that simply say, let go of your thoughts and come back to your breathing can be very good instructions. But what happens without instruction is that it's very easy than not to learn anything about what goes on and thinking.

It's kind of like you have a house with four rooms, and you've been living in three rooms. And someone tells you whenever you're going to go into that fourth room, just don't go in. Just don't go and you know, and because not useful to go in there. And so you never learned about that room and in your house, because you never go in. You know, there's room there, but you know, so we thinking is like a whole part of our world and There's a lot going on there, it's a lot to understand to study and be aware of. So it's an interesting to take it into, into what goes on. And but for the purposes of meditation, we want to learn about thinking. So the thinking doesn't get the upper hand so we don't get lost in thought, or thinking doesn't keep us agitated and caught up in, you know, the world of thinking. So it's useful to distinguish different kinds of thinking that we do. And over the course of a day in different situations, thinking has different different ways of thinking different kinds of thinking. And probably each person has their own variety of ways of thinking. So I'm not gonna say there's any one way it has to be. But there is a kind of thinking that sometimes called the discursive thinking. And discursive thinking is having a discussion, that's how I understand it. A conversation. Whether it's Another person or just with yourself, it's thinking about some complicated story and reviewing a story telling the story telling a fantasy, it's having a whole discussion, it's having a whole, you know, explaining something to someone, some people spend a lot of time in thinking, explaining, explaining themselves justifying why they did something 20 years ago, and explaining why they did it, or explaining, you know, all kinds of stuff. So, discursive thinking is more conversational, like you have a conversation in your head that goes on. And that tends to be kind of thinking that this connects us to ourselves, even though it's very compelling and kind of that's where many people center gravity is it feels like you're really involved in important things. It's not very embodied. It's not very centered and grounded to do a lot of discursive thinking. The and then they're kind of thinking that is More is more to do about what's happening in their present moment. And it's where it might be a more simple form of it would be simple discovery simple.

Describing of what the experience is like a naturalist taking field notes in the in the field. Oh, you know, there's an itch. And my mind is thinking and thinking about yesterday, I seem to be have a lot of energy from my thinking about yesterday. And now there seems to be some emotions connected to it. those emotions I feel in my body. So it's kind of more descriptive of what's happening is kind of like describing where the attention is going in the present moment. And what the present moment is in your you're seeing in the present moment. And there's not like a big conversation. It's not like a big discussion and justification or fixing it, just a very simple in the present moment. you're describing what's going on. And then there's a kind of thinking that is a dreamlike kind of whisper in the mind it dreamlike images dreamlike, with the thoughts and ideas just come and go. And the mind is very relaxed perhaps. And this kind of kind of floats through and you're kind of you know it's very and sometimes it's very easy to let it just float by. And sometimes the because of the mind something that is needed because of the pleasantness of that kind of thinking. But sometimes those are very easy to get, you know, swept away and kind of get pulled into there and just wander off, but it was very pleasant, nice thoughts going on the first type of discursive thinking, or they say it this way, that some people have the idea that in meditation, you're supposed to have a silent mind, you know, just stop the thinking entirely. And there are times when thinking seemed to stop or does stop. And it can be very enjoyable, very meaningful, very helpful sometimes to have those experiences But if you set up a non thinking mind is the goal of meditation, then you probably shortchange your mindfulness practice and you set up an expectation of something that should be it's different than what's happening. And you don't have to stop thinking in order to do the meditation.

And also, most people don't have a mute button in their brain, you know, we should be to just that, find that button use. Stop, please turn it off. And you can have a nice serene mind no thoughts whatsoever. I don't think anybody has found the mute button that way. But there are there are, it is possible to change the channel. And so this is a skill that's worth developing. So you recognize are the different kinds of thinking different ways of thinking the way the ways you think. And then you can see that some ways of thinking are not that useful. And you don't want to keep keep doing it. It's possible to change the channel like, maybe dial down to something to lower channel frequency or something. And so like, it's a lot of discursive thinking, a lot of planning and a lot of repeating the same history of your life over and over again, explaining yourself to someone justifying yourself whatever it might be, then you can, you know, realize this, that kind of thinking is kind of disconnected, it's agitated, it's a little, little spinning around a lot. I'm up in my head a lot. And that's really kicked my body. Maybe there's a way of relaxing or settling or stopping to do that. And it's not such a not as high to stop all thinking is to higher bar. But maybe that kind of thinking you can, you can let go. And you know, I don't have to have a conversation right now. I don't have to have a whole story explaining what's going on right now. And so how do you dial that down? Maybe by the Here's where you can relax. Sometimes you can soften attention, the pressure that's in the head that's connected to that thinking, sometimes you can feel the energy of that kind of thinking and take a moment just to feel the energetics of it and let it settle. Sometimes you could take a few moments to study what that kind of discursive thinking is about for you get to know it better. What are you doing when you have discursive thinking? And some people will find that their mind is jumping around a lot. And you feel like you know, jumping jumping in because some people are really scattered when they think just one one topic another topic is jumping around. Some people, it just it's fast and furious. They're thinking very quickly. Sometimes there's a kind of leaning forward with thinking sometimes sometimes it's like, you know, like you, you have to think because you're about to fall over the edge, you know, it's like dire things are gonna happen. You have to think and solve it or sometimes thinking is a way of disconnecting through what's going on. So you pick Feel like a pulling back into the thoughts so you kind of safer back there. So you can feel the energetics and feel kind of the attitude or feel something was going on with that discursive thinking, that might give you a clue about how to dial down how to shift gears with what you're doing thinking. So, if, if you're all jumping around and

scattered in your thoughts, maybe the tuning the tuning in to changing your channel, is to come into your body and feel more grounded. Come to a more grounded centered place. So center yourself, maybe if you find that you're Leaning, leaning forward or pulling back, maybe there's a way even physically in your brain to kind of feel like you're settling in this into a center of gravity. plumb line just being here. If you are, if there's a lot, a lot of energy going on, just you feel all agitated energy, maybe What's needed is to, to net to.to dial down are tuned to channel is take a while and bring attention to just hold the energy. Don't worry about what you're thinking about, just hold very gently the energy of all the thinking that goes on the agitation that place with this pressure or attention or the place in your body seems really activated all thinking, maybe it's the head, maybe the top of the head, and just hold it in awareness. It can't underestimate how valuable it is sometimes just to let things be better let him be in the embrace of your awareness. They have to kind of be with it. And then see what happened, maybe all the need maybe that it begins to unwind. But that also may be steps you back to being more observer of it, or rather than being a cost of that. So the idea of finding a way to switch gears to switch channels, so you might still be thinking and the thinking you pick up maybe sometimes it's good to pick up a different kind of things. So it might be useful to pick up the descriptive thinking of what's happening the present moment, you can't stop your thinking. But you can, you can maybe start thinking in a different way.

And so you might start having descriptions of what's actually your present moment experience. So feel nuts. Oh, now this is happening. Now this is happening, this is happening. And that'll be spring you still thinking but just to get brings you into the present moment more and keeps you there. And then you get curious for what's here, what's going on. And then after a while, you can if you get you know, that helps you get more centered more here, then you can start maybe having spaces between the descriptions and explore the gaps between your thoughts. You can't stop the thinking but maybe you can have a little pause before you pick up the next sentence. The next thought and one great way to do it. Sometimes too as you exhale, let go let your thoughts just kind of fade away. Whatever you're thinking and exhale, ideas fade away. The image I use for children teaching them meditations, is it's like a soap bubble, a thought bubble, and just let it float away. As you as you breathe out, it's that whatever you're thinking about floats away. It'll come back you know, soon enough in other bubble, but, but then there's a maybe a momentary or gap or pause and just appreciate that pause between your thoughts. Don't be kind of news. And that breaks the and breaks the enchantment with your thinking and what you want to do find a place to rest there. The other thing that's interesting to do with thoughts is to be aware of the emotions that are connected. Thinking. And sometimes when there's a lot of thinking going on. One way to change the channel is to stop focusing on what the content of your thoughts are, and focus more on the emotional feeling or the attitude that's behind the thoughts, supporting the thoughts fueling the thoughts and see if and if that can be held in the embrace of awareness. You don't have to No, no, no emotion needs to be seen as wrong. And maybe no emotion needs to be seen as something to be fixed. But it is something to hold in the embrace of your awareness of your mindfulness to hold it there and see what happens. So what I'd like to suggest today is that you maybe you can't stop your thinking. But there are choices you can make. Within this whole territory of thinking thinking is not a unitary singular thing. As you start studying and get to know how it works for you. There are different kinds of There are different sensations and energies and feelings guide to the thinking. And maybe there's ways of changing the channel, switching the gears, changing how you think, in the range of ways in which you think. So you don't have to continue thinking the way you are. Because if you if you let go of your thought, and you're still thinking the same way, it'll just keep grabbing your keep grabbing you. But if you kind of take in and recognize how you're thinking, and get familiar with it over time, maybe you're four months, then at some point, you can learn how to switch to channels and release enough of that. Don't need to do that anymore. A, and I'll give you one last thing I'll say about this is that when I first sit down to meditate pretty much every time I don't make it a big point to let go of my thoughts. sight, I often just focus on my breathing as center. And I just kind of left my thoughts be in the background, I

don't really, you know, too concerned about them and they plenty of time they come into the foreground. And I don't mind. And, you know, but then when I can I come back to the breath or let go and all that. But after a period of time, I don't know how long it is. So some period of time 510 minutes into the sitting, there comes this wonderful moment for me, where this there's more clarity in the mind or more clear recognition. I don't I don't need to do this anymore. This is not interesting anymore. Enough of this thinking. And just like some somehow somehow it's gotten clear there. The atmosphere has gotten clear enough. And it's it seems like a very natural thing, just like the obvious thing. Okay. Enough of this. And then then I've learned that at that point I can change the channel and just let certain kinds of thinking just recede and fade away. My thinking doesn't stop. But then the thinking becomes much more supportive the meditation and much closer to meditation, or becomes much more subtle and, and then again, I can leave it in the background that it doesn't disturb what's going on for me. So I hope that your world of thinking is something that you can study and learn from and learning about it become wiser. Thank you