

2015-07-20 Stop Recognize Feel Relax

Thu, 9/17 10:58PM • 38:09

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

relax, stop, people, recognize, meditation, happening, mind, deepest, tension, relaxation, tense, swimming, relaxed, meditate, life, mindfulness, feel, experience, sit, deeply

SPEAKERS

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So, welcome to IMC. It's nice to sit with you all. And I hope it was nice for you to come together with a group of other people to meditate, sit unusual thing to do overall in our society. People don't usually sit together for 45 minutes in silence. And normally they don't. You know? I appreciate it being here with you a lot. So I wanted to talk a little bit this evening about a particular way of presenting mindfulness practice. There's many ways of presenting it, organizing it. And so different different presentations work for different people. So I'd like to offer you one and maybe some of You will be interesting to get this perspective. And this is to divide the practice into four aspects. And one way of understanding these four is they're sequential do one after the other. The other is they're completely random, which you do, you know, different aspects different times you do different parts of it. Another way of understanding it is that you might do all four initially. And then as the practice deepens, some of them drop away, and you're finally just left with maybe one of them or none of them. So the four aspects are stopping, recognizing, feeling and relaxing for things to do. First, first, we stop then we recognize what's happening. Then we feel what's happening. We experience what's happening. So the and then finally there's Rick, just relax, relax with what's happening. And then you do it again, those four things. And if you do those four as you sit in practice, then your practice will go quite far. So the first one to stop is maybe the most important. I'll probably say that each one is the most important. And, but there has to be some stopping. In order to do we might be mindful to practice mindfulness. And what that means is that the, for many times our minds, our minds are busy. We're caught up in our thoughts. We're racing ahead. Some of you meditated here this evening. Probably were surprised at how much momentum your mind had and your thoughts and you know, some of you probably were a little bit frustrated because your mind wouldn't shut up. And that's kind of like wouldn't stop and just went on, you know, my Your mind is a mind of its own. And so but there has to be some stopping even if you can't stop your mind, there has to be some little movement of just not completely going head over heels with it. Little bit like step back and noticing, oh, this is what's happening now. Or that or just a lot, a lot of stopping just like us kind of come to a stop. We do that physically, we sit down, and it makes a big difference to physically stop. We physically stopped, you know, with our bodies and sit down and everybody's quiet. And most of us sit with our eyes closed. Some people have their eyes open, but to see the eyes. So we stopped seeing we stopped the activity of looking and many people are very visually focused on the world and are on our screens that we look at and to stop that looking is a Big deal for minds that are always looking and searching and trying to understand what's going on. And so there's a kind of physical stopping. And that allows us to catch up to ourselves notice what's going on, to check in with ourselves in a way that maybe we couldn't if we just kind of continue doing what we were doing all day long and just gone to the next thing.

And I think that for many people, the idea of really stopping in some deep way, just stopping their activities is a hard thing to do is a foreign thing for them to do. There's a strong drive to always go on to

the next thing and one things and, and now that so many people are looking at monitors of one size or another. There's that if you watch your mind and your eyes and what kind of the way in which we search the way which we're looking, there's kind of an inset and continuous kind of looking and searching on our monitors and seeing what's going on and, and so the mind isn't stopped, you know? What's the next thing what's the next And sometimes it becomes a habit, you know, you stay on the computer for a little bit too long. And you kind of think it's time to stop. But your mind is like, what's the next thing what's the next thing I could look at just keep going and looking. And so there's not any rest in that the mind doesn't get a chance to rest. And so to stop means to start letting something to rest. Some people what it means before they can rest it means they get to find out what's really going on to feel and notice the momentum. So even though we can't stop, we stop enough to notice how much energy there is going on. So a story there was a species of humans that were born in the ocean and they spent their whole lives swimming and they would swim alone. And take care of everything swimming. They're always swimming in the ocean, swimming north and south, but never all directions. And it all went on for generations. But at some point, there was one of these humans who thought this is kind of tiring to always, always be swimming, swimming, swimming, swimming, swimming, always swimming. And so the person decided heard rumors that far out to the east, there was a place like land like an island or something if you went there. It was kind of like this Shangri la place where you could you know, rest because you don't have to swim. So the person swam and swam and swam and swam for a long time, months and months but didn't come across anything. Person Ask someone and say, Do you heard of that place? Oh, I think it's far to the south. So the person swam from months to the south, swimming swimming, swimming. Nothing. And someone said well to the north, swimming, swimming for months, nothing. And then someone said, You know, I think it's really to the west. And so the person swam for maybe years, looking and looking, swimming, you know, how to work to swim. And then finally, a person ran into an old elder, wise old person and said, you know, where the places where we could finally kind of stop swimming and just rest, I'm exhausted. And the person is the wise person said, Oh, yes, I know. The person was really excited. Someone who finally knows it's not just a rumor was like, Oh, I'm so excited and happy. And then the person said, well, all you have to do is flip over on your back and float.

So little bit like that's, that's what meditation is about you know is that it's that easy. Flip over in your mind and float. Float and float in awareness. Float and just being stop, you're swimming. Some of you guys have been swimming for decades. Some of you never even knew until you meditated, that All you ever did was swim in your minds, you're swimming your thoughts within your desires, finish up swimming your fears, feel some in your fantasies, you know, swimming, always doing doing doing. And, you know, he might have been better off if you hadn't known that you were always so busy. But then you came to meditate and you realize, Oh, no, and I never rest. There are people who are so weary happens on retreats more than anywhere else, that people go and long meditation retreats, like a week long retreat, and about You know, three, four days into it. They're kind of like, they come into the interview and they're kind of meeting with the teacher. They're kind of stunned. And they say, I have no idea how incessantly My mind is always going, and how exhausted I am. I'm conventionally I'm good, all the rest I need, it's nice to be on their treat. I'm sleeping really well. In fact, I'm sleeping better here than at home. It's getting lots of rest. But now that I'm really paying attention, there's a deep layer of weariness in my mind, where this constant going that goes on. So meditation we're learning to, in a sense, to stop to float to rest. And it can be frightening to do that because the messages we've received from our culture and all kinds of things, is that there's always some Shangri La there's always something we have to get. We're only successful on the right if only trays are on the good. person, if we get this stuff, something happens, something has to be accomplished. And so then we become like the person who's always swimming, not realizing that what's needed is right here. And now it's not far away. It just flipping over and you're back and resting. There's something very profound. And this I think, all

the spiritual traditions that have kind of meditation or contemplative mystical aspects to them, emphasize how important it is how valuable it is to stop that something new gets born out of that stopping. I like to think of it as the life becomes three dimensional, that we normally people live in two dimensional life, because it's dimension of just thoughts and ideas and desires and the spinning of the mind. But once we kind of stop and that layer of the mind can kind of be put in proper perspective, then multiple dimensions of our life begin to show itself it's richer and nicer. So rather than being diminished by stopping rather than becoming less, because we stop, we actually grow and develop more. So I know there's a lot of websites to search now. And so you can get a lot of information, a lot of wonderful experiences a lot of great things by you know, you know, the person who visits the most websites win wins, right?

And I'm sure all of you know will come to the pearly gates and God will ask us how many websites do you visit and you have to have an accounting and if you didn't watch enough, you know what happens. So, but actually things but you know, if we, you know, it's like the pressure you know, to anyway, to stop and not get more information, provides us with some deeper knowledge, some deeper wisdom and to make the house happens. So this is a little bit of cheerleading for The value of stuffing, maybe all of you know that you came here and stop today to meditate together. The second thing to do in this four part sequence of mindfulness is to recognize what's going on. And that could actually be the form of stopping, things don't stop. But you just recognize what's happening. There's a kind of stopping there. Oh, that's what's happening now. It means you're here and now my mind is out of control. I recognize my mind is going on at the moment, there's a little bit of stopping a little bit, not just kind of barreling ahead with the mind out of control. But this next second step is recognizing what's going on. And this is probably the most important part of these four. And that is to so means to, you know, identify, oh, I'm angry and sad. I'm confused. There's a lot of thoughts. There's a lot of energy in my body. There's a lot of feelings. There's other people in the room. The other people are angry, the other people are sad. The other people are kind and friendly. There's a lot of people, there's a few people. There's me, someone needs my help. So we started recognizing what's going on in the present moment. And just stop. Thinking about oneself all the time to stop thinking about one's future desires and fears, helps us to recognize more deeply what is actually going on going on here, here and now. The wisdom of Buddhism comes from recognizing deeply what is here. I was very impressed many years ago and I read someone talking about Buddhism, and said, this person said, everything that you need to know about Buddhism can be discovered through your own powers of observation. Everything you need to know can be discovered through your own Power of recognition. You don't have to read a lot of books on Buddhism, you don't have to read go on to a lot of websites. You don't even have to go and listen to a lot of Dharma talks, including this one. But you need to observe need to recognize that this is what's going on. This is what's going on. So in the simplest way, it's continuity of mindfulness, being mindful of what's happening while it's happening. And then that begins to help with the three dimensionality of life because noticing more and richer and what's going on. Some of you have been on retreat, maybe you've had another time in your life. When the mind stops enough, this the our capacity for essential of our senses, our senses become more alert. The doors of perception are more open, they say, and it's quite fun to kind of feel like you come you walk out of the retreat center for example, or come Meditation. And you look at a leaf on the ground or a candy wrapper on the ground. And it's so beautiful. The candy wrapper it's shiny and nice. It's amazing. Wow. candy wrapper you spend looking at it people think you're strange. It's Wow. You know, are you stoned? You know, I just did but it isn't just the candy wrappers that leaves the skies. It's people's faces. It's people's, you know, just anything. You look at it as sparkle. Sometimes it feels very nice. This three dimensional quality, the richness of this, nothing has to happen, you know, to get anything. Just just just it's so great. So developing this power of being the present moment recognizing what's here. The recognition part is more cognitive. It's more kind of rec labeling or cognitive recognition. This is WhatsApp You can actually say this is what's

happening. But mindfulness is more than mind. activity. It's more than just cognitive aspect of the mind. It's allowing yourself to feel I like the word feel on men for works for you, and allows you to experience it physically, viscerally. To release that kind of sense. What is the experience like?

So it's one thing now this evening, just to recognize that the air conditioners on, it's another it's another thing to recognize that you are unhappy, cold or happy that it's on or whatever. But it's another thing to kind of take a moment to really feel what it's like on your skin. If you feel a little bit of cold air going across your skin, and really sense it from the perspective of your arms like me, my short sleeve shirt on. So what is it? What's the experience in my arms of feeling the air conditioner, what's the experience of my ears, hearing the What is it? Like? What's that? Like? So it's not? It's like, what is the experience of the senses themselves of whatever is happening? So what does it feel like there anything at all viscerally it would just feel like in your stomach was if you like in your chest, you're in a conversation with someone, what's actually what actually the feelings the sensorial experiences of your body is you're there as a going on. So you want to be able to experience something more than just know intellectually what's happening. You want to be able to be with the experience in a fuller way. And this also is moving into more the three dimensional quality of the experience. There's a lot more information about what's happening in ourselves and around us. If we tune in to the physical embodied experience of what's happening in the moment, as opposed to just kind of thinking about it or being cognitive about it. For one thing, we can have a richer experience of our emotions, the emotional relationships What's going on the impact experience has on us. So that's the third. So first we want to stop. And we want to recognize, and then we want to feel the experience. And then the fourth thing to do is to relax. whatever is going on, relax. Maybe you're already relaxed. Maybe you don't need to relax. But most people, there's usually some space to relax around what's going on. So whatever is happening, relax around it. And many times in life, the tension we have around whatever's happening isn't really that helpful. Occasionally, it might be helpful, to hopefully have the wisdom to know when you're supposed to be tense. But I would argue that you know, 95% of your attention is not needed. And in fact, it keeps us tension keeps us in this two dimensional world. keeps us from really connecting more deeply what going on, partly because tension is a kind of a closing down or a tightening up or freezing. That, that keeps us kind of in a state of kind of a little bit froze at least part of us. Oh, frozen state, chronically tense muscle muscles go numb. And so that's a kind of freezing or kind of, you know, we're not as the experience or the experience of life is not so rich. So, to recognize what's happening, feel it by feeling in your body feeling what's going on. We start recognizing also where the tension is. And then can we relax? Are you holding your belly, soft in the belly, or your shoulder, your shoulders can use relax your shoulders a little bit. It doesn't have to be a lot. Just a teeny bit. I like the I like the idea sometimes of when I can't relax, softening around something. She's softer. around that tension. That's it. That's enough. Some people sometimes it's interesting to notice what you're doing with your hands, or your arms. Are there ways of having your hands be more relaxed? Or your arms? noticing your postures, your posture, you know tense, or is it relaxed is the way your feet are touching the floor? Are they relaxed? Are they tense? And those you can watch people they're kind of, they get they push their, their, their feedback and they're on their toes, just kind of feels like a little tense. They're holding themselves. Where's your attention? Is your attention around your forehead? So attention in your brain around your eyes? Is it possible to relax? It's possible to relax too much. And this emphasis on having a relaxed posture. Some people interpret that to mean they should be a couch potato kind of just slumped.

The deepest relaxation that a human And experience happens actually when we're either in the corpse posture and yoga, or sitting upright and across lotus position, cross legged position. And if you're in a chair, the deepest relaxation doesn't come from using the backrest. But actually, if all things are kind of normal, I suppose or what healthier something, you don't have a back issue or something that is sitting

upright and straight back, because it allows the musculature, your shoulders and everything to relax most deeply when you're well aligned in your spine. So you don't want to slump that doesn't really offer the deepest relaxation. Relaxation also supports the letting go of the clinging in our mind. Most tension involves worse we're obsessing about something we're holding on to something we're clinging to something a thought and idea, a wish or a fear. We're holding it we're kind of locked onto some strong emotion. Perhaps the most locking on in the mind is often the source of our attention, physical tension. If we can relax our physical tension, it often supports the relaxation of the mind or of the heart. So relax, relax. And don't don't make it a big project to relax. Don't get tense, relaxing. Don't try too hard, but a little bit, just a little bit and then go back and do the cycle again. Now that you're relaxed, what can you stop doing? What what needs to be recognized now? What can be felt more fully and now of having felt more fully, what's now further can relax. Follow that cycle. If you follow that cycle through a period of meditation, I think you'll probably find meditation very satisfying. Never be a very ambitious when you meditate. Take your time, lots of time. That's what the start there what the stopping means. Give yourself lots of time. Meditation needs to be inefficient. Isn't that terrible? The reason it needs to be inefficient is that the drive for efficiency is just more movement. And speeding is an activity of the mind. It's more swimming. We have to really stop swimming. The person who flips over in the water to float it was to give to get the instruction out you can just flip over in the water and float and says yes. But I think I guess I have to swim first to get there. to swim harder, so I can flip over and float. So only only by swimming Can I be efficient. No, no, no, stop. efficient stop trying to get anywhere. But anyway, so it takes lots of time, give yourself time, time for meditators, his healing time, his health, time just to be so great. So as we do these steps, stop, recognize, feel and relax. At some point, you don't need to relax anymore. At some point relaxing anymore, it gets in the way, just you relax, you're relaxed in the adequate way. And to try to be even more relaxed. This just gets in the way, just more doing. And so we stopped relaxing. And then at some point, the effort to keep recognizing what's going on, or that's not really needed anymore. You're really there. You're, you're grounded in the present moment. You know, you don't have to recognize what's going on. You are What's going on or what's going on just shows itself to you very clearly you don't have to make any effort to recognize you also don't have to make any effort really effort anymore to feel it because you just there in your body just everything's being felt very clearly. And there are times you don't need to record you need to donate to do anything to stop. In fact, to try to stop it just one more doing. Initially, it's kind of nice to stop, try to stop or stop in small steps. But the paradox is, the activity of stopping is still a doing.

So at some point, as you get more more relaxed, more still and more quiet, even the effort to try to stop more, keeps you from stopping. And the best thing you can do is to do less, just, just be just be and let the whole process at some point the process begins kind of doing itself. You don't need to do anything anymore to practice. You just have to very gently love the Present Moment love the process love attention, just be there in a in a dedicated way. And then the process begins to unfold more and more on its own. So to start, to recognize, to feel and to relax. Any questions about that? anything anybody like to ask?

Yeah, you pass this back to the background here.

Is there any particular wisdom in the order? And the reason why I say that is I was listening to you

and my shoulders as they usually are up around my ears, it occurred to me that maybe I need to start with relaxing.

Sure. I think that different times different circumstances, different ones as a starting point, the gate and also stopping and relaxing are not that different from each other. Right? So another way of saying rely,

saying relax is saying, stop being tense. So, you know, so, but different sometimes recognizing is the most important. That's why I was kind of joking. Each of them is the most Important, right? So meaning that different times different ones are important than and like, yeah, you might you might experiment with doing lots of relaxing.

Yes, great, but could you wait for the mic to come to you? Because some people have here, hearing system devices, and they can't hear the question unless we hit on the mic.

I think one thing that happens often to very analytical people when they're trying to stop their thoughts and recognize them and relax around them. There's kind of this backlash of No, but I need to keep thinking this through being agitated because I'm figuring out things. Yeah. You know, and if I say something, you feel really guilty about it. It's like, well, if I just stop, and I'm living ignorance, I'm not finding this important thing. So what would your advice be if you find yourself with particular issues of shame or self hatred caught up in this desire that you really need to not relax? It's really important. Great.

Well, the first thing I would say, for people like that is I would actually congratulate them for seeing clearly what's going on. There's some clarity there, recognizing that that's a huge step. It's something to feel good about to have that recognition, not just be weighed. That way. Buy it or feel bad, but actually feel good Oh, there's an act of recognition. And then maybe it needs more attention, to spend time getting to know that part of oneself better. to maybe it's something that needs to be cared for and listened to maybe maybe maybe by listening to that voice, that tendency in a deep way, maybe it's never been listened to before. Maybe there's depths and aspects of it that you don't even know. And only by listening deeply, can you discover what's really needed. Because chances are that what's really needed is not figuring out the answer. And maybe just being loved is in something inside can relax if it feels cared for and listened to and respected. Thank you. Yes, another mic over here now or if when you move it up here to the front

Okay, I'm kind of embarrassing to admit, but I, I realized that the only time that I'm 100 really, really relaxed is when I'm lying down.

Great. I'm glad you recognize that. I hope you have a chance to lay down regularly.

like sitting down I can

ever be. So the reason you say you're embarrassed is because because in the context of meditation, that we often sit up when we're meditating. Yeah. So I think that for you to recognize that you get really relaxed when you lay down, then it's a tool. It's a resource for you that you should probably use if it's helpful for you. And if you want to meditate, also, besides just relaxing Then you need to experiment and find out whether your meditation really deepens by being relaxed in the kind of way you are lying down, or whether you need to sit up to allow for the alertness for something even deeper to happen. So you might want to experiment and maybe if, after a busy day 10 stay, maybe use your tool of laying down and relax for 510 minutes, and then set up and see if you can keep some of that relaxation. But see if the sitting up allows for some kind of alertness to go on. And chances are that the deepest relaxation, you know of the mind and the heart won't happen when you're lying down. Unless you're a very good meditator. There are some people who meditate that way because they have to, but probably, you know, and also to learn how to have a relaxed mind and heart sitting upright. It's closer to how we live our lives. Most of our lives are bright so you might actually learn then how to continue that

noodle your life better than if you're always relying on lying down. But I think for you to discover that for yourself is great. should use that. Like, sometimes.

I hadn't thought about the trying to set up. I mean, it I realized in the last few years because I used to be able to, I find even even in a movie theater. I mean, anywhere I just I, when I'm sitting I tend to tense up even when I'm supposedly relaxing.

I see. So one of the things you might say this is always probably, you know, the approach of mindfulness is when you notice something like that, that you're always tensing up, is Don't be in a hurry to, to stop that, but study it. So stop means I'm gonna stop for my attention and pay attention to it. And I'm going to recognize attention clearly. What is the nature of attention? What is it? Where is it? How's it work? What's going on? And And then feel it more fully. And sometimes that's needed, you need to do that for a long time, that's actually more important in the relaxing. Because sometimes if emphasize on relaxing, emphasis on relaxing, letting go can be a bypass where we don't when we don't really learn what's happening. And we're really looking for us to learn what the underlying conditions are. causes are for why we get tense. And if we figure out a quick way to relax, and bypass understanding, then we go back into the world. And we'll just tense up again next chance we have. So you might want to also take some time to not relax, but to get to know your tension a lot better. really figure out what's going on. And what are the interesting ways of getting to know about tension also. So sometimes when you're tense stop and really get to know what's going on, emotionally, physically, cognitively what's going on. But if you have your want your wonderful tool have laying down and relaxing deeply. Do that. But then as you leave that relaxed state and start your day, again, your activity, pay very careful attention to notice. What's the first little symptoms of tension coming back and then stop and look at that gets into what happened there, because that's not the real key. Okay. So one I think we have time for one more. It's the outer Hall.

I wanted to know when you're sleeping, how can you completely always relax when you're sleeping, and sleeping?

But not not everyone's relaxed completely when they're sleeping. When I was Many periods of my life where I was surprised, especially when I was really surprised when I was in the monasteries, but I first discovered this was that I'd be more relaxed after the morning meditation than I was when I woke up. I don't know I think for many people, they're like, there's sleep certainly is rejuvenating. It can be relaxing. But there's deeper layers of relaxation possible through meditation and being alert.

But don't just make relaxing being the name of the game. We don't want to you know, you know, we don't want to just the world of people just kind of walking around relaxed. Probably some of you get fired from your jobs if there is appropriate I don't call attention but there is appropriate and know what to call it. application. There's appropriate tension. There's appropriate tautness there is appropriate kind of, you know, you know, tell a marathon racer, just relax. It's mostly not certainly some relaxation But anyway, don't make relaxation, the name of the game only, but there's there's value. Right effort. Yeah. So maybe we should stop it's nine o'clock, but if you could come up afterwards and ask me if you'd like. And so you might experiment with these four steps and see which one of them is you enjoy the most Whichever them you need the most. Thank you