

2016-05-11 Practice Notes Practicing With Discomfort

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SPEAKERS

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So in these short little practice notes, we call them two, three minute little talks about practice, I can't cover everything about practice, just touch on one little thing. And what I'd like to touch on today is the value of practicing with discomfort. And then another time, I can talk about the value of practicing with comfort, with pleasure, both of them have very important role in our practice. When we're uncomfortable, or when we feel something unpleasant, it's a wonderful opportunity for developing not only your mindfulness practice, but also developing your capacity to be free. And what's nice to do is to win. Even small discomforts arise, like if you're meditating, to turn towards it, rather than turn away from it, rather than fixing it, turn towards it. And sometimes the smaller ones are the great kind of laboratories of exploration, because, you know, they're not such a big deal. So it's, you're gonna have to be patient with it and turn towards it, and learn a number of things you can learn about yourself, how you tend to react and respond, and the beliefs are set in motion. And, you know, you know how what your relationship is to discomfort, you can also discover how to be present for it, and to relax into it, almost like you're relaxing with it. So it has more space to be there, it has more permission to be there. And then to hang with it and just see what happens. See what goes on. And you might learn that it's different than what you originally thought you might learn a capacity for equanimity and peacefulness with it. And more important, you might discover a capacity to be free with it. And to develop the capacity to do that is a great capacity. Early on in my Buddhist training, somehow I hit upon this idea that I should practice with discomfort as well. And so when I was doing things that were uncomfortable, I think I made it the object of attention rather than something to get over quickly or fix. I wasn't a masochist. I didn't three, no, I tried to search it out or prolong it unnecessarily. But I did try to give it some respect and time. So you know, you're sitting and meditating, it might be as simple as having an itch. And it just can come with tremendous authority, like you're going to die if you don't scratch. But I don't think anybody has died in the moment of having an itch. And so to, to sit there and just sit with it, and explore it and be present for it and relax with it. And is it possible to have a relaxed awareness, a relaxed way of being with the niche. And sooner or later it will pass. Or a few weeks ago, I sat down, like I'm sitting here, as soon as I sat down, I had a cramp in my foot. And, you know, probably, you know, the cramps can be very intense, I didn't think it was deadly. So I just got curious. And I got just amazingly curious about this whole experience, both the cramp and my reaction and the heat that arose and the energy and were different parts, my body got to kind of energized by it and, and the emotions that arose. He was kind of like a, it was like a circus in there. And it was kind of fun, like, I got more and more curious than what went on. As opposed to alarmed. And, you know, this is terrible. And this is doesn't really count. This is not really good practice, you know, if only if only it wasn't there, then I could really practice, then I could get calm and serene, if only, you know, I could switch my posture, then I can practice. There's definitely a time to change your posture, definitely a time to avoid having discomfort, for sure. But there's also a

time to hang in there with it, and grow in the process of working with it then. And it might not be because it's uncomfortable, it might not be comfortable to practice with it. But you might get much stronger as a practitioner, you might get much stronger as a person because of your capacity to kind of become bigger than the discomfort to have the ability to stay with it. So I'd encourage you today, not to be I don't encourage you to be uncomfortable. Don't do something that makes you uncomfortable to do this exercise. But if it should happen, just accidentally, somehow or other it should happen. Today or some point in this next year, there's some point you find yourself uncomfortable.

When you notice that, see what it's like to enter into it with awareness and relax with it to just be with it as if it has permission to be there. See if it's possible not to react. And if you are reacting, just get curious. Oh, what's the what's this, learn about that and see what what goes on for you. And if you do this, it will serve you really well in the long term for your practice and your life. Great. Thank you.