

Practice Note: The Magic of Recognition

Transcribed and edited from a short talk by Gil Fronsdal on January 11, 2017

One of the key elements of mindfulness practice is recognition – this simple recognition of what's happening as it's happening. Recognition is the noticing, clear seeing, and knowing what it is that's happening. You can be present – resting in the present – which is quite nice. But there might not be much clarity about what's actually happening.

As it gets more settled and relaxed, at some point the clarity factor – the recognition factor – gets stronger. We're clearly recognizing, "Oh, that's a thought. I'm thinking." As opposed to letting the thoughts flow along, happily, merrily on their own. We're kind of in it, or we're completely in it, and we don't really recognize that we're thinking so much, because what we're thinking about is so captivating.

At some point the act of mindfulness is this clear recognition: "Oh, look at that, I'm thinking. *That's* what's happening." That moment of recognition – that act of recognition – is a kind of stepping away, getting some distance from it, or getting an overview. Where you're not really stuck in it or involved in it. It's like the recognition is here, in one place, and the thinking is somewhere else. In doing that, we tend not to be as identified with the thinking. We don't define ourselves in it; we don't live in it as strongly. There's a freedom to be found in that clear recognition. There's a strong emotion.

We can be flowing along in it, but what we're looking for is that place of clear recognition: "Ah, *this* is what's happening." It's not a denial. It's not an aversion to what's happening. It's being very respectful of what's happening, and respectful of oneself because of this clarity of recognition. The uniqueness, the specialness, of this thing. As a result of that, the relationship we have with it tends not to be so sticky. It's like unsticking ourselves from it through the power of recognition.

Whether it's a thought, a feeling, a desire, an aversion, a sound, or body sensations, there's something very magical and special about the human capacity to have clear recognition: "Ah, *this* is happening. *This* is happening."

As you practice today, you might see if you can discover the treasure, or the magic, of recognition. See if you can discover the treasure, or the magic, of recognition – the clear knowing of, "That's this, or that." See if you can identify or recognize the place from which you do recognizing. It's almost like the activity of recognizing can be known in a way that's satisfying. You might experiment, look, see what you can find about your capacity to recognize. I hope you enjoy the morning.