

2017-12-04 Deep Connection Through Doing Nothing

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SPEAKERS

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So that I've been thinking about two things. One is about the on nominally, the way people talk about the tremendous amount of connecting that goes on with our technology, people are so connected on their phones. On, I see it with my, I have two teenage sons. It's phenomenal. How much they're on their phone, and they're doing their homework with one hand, and the other hand is the phone. And it's quite a thing to see, they're very connected in the network of friends through texting and Instagram, and I don't know what all the things they do, but they're, they're my friend, my kids are more connected to more people more regularly, then probably a day than I was in a month or a year and growing up as a teenager. It's quite something. So all this, you know, social networking that goes on people are well connected. And one of the images I have for this wonderful connectivity is a neighbor of ours who walks down the street. Every time we see the neighbor, there's the phone, looking down, looking down at the phone, hardly noticing the neighbors and the people around. connected, but not connected, connected to something, but not connected to neighbors that people on the street. But I think more importantly, it's too easy to in this connected world. To lose connection to we're probably where it's most important to be connected, is with oneself. And I think that we have lots of people who are becoming increasingly alienated from themselves, where the idea of sitting quietly and doing nothing would be a pourraient would be impossible, you might miss something important. And so there was thinking about that some today. And then I was the other thing I was thinking about was the importance of doing nothing. And that one of the ways of practicing meditation, practicing mindfulness is to basically do nothing. Except, notice what happens when you do that. Notice what happens in the present moment, stay in the present moment, and know what happens. So I've been told that if you are a nature photographer, in this in the great plains of Africa, that if you want to take a lot of photographs of many different kinds of animals, that the why strategy is to go sit at the watering holes. Because sooner or later, all the animals have to come to the watering holes. And it's a lot easier to sit there and wait for them to come to you than it is to wander around the plains looking for, you know the animals. So it's a little bit like that, when we sit down to do nothing. It's not really nothing because you can't do really nothing. But we sit down to do nothing, but be aware. And lo and behold, all these things will come visit you. All these animals will come all these different parts of yourself will come. And if you want to be connected to yourself, well, one powerful strategy is to do nothing. And sit there and notice what happens. Now there are meditation practices that are techniques that people do. There's, you know, series of steps 12345, ABC, and then apply yourself and do this practice and that practice and then do this and when that happens through that, and it's very much a technique practice. And for some people that works really well. And they're very significant. They're very significant. They're in their own right. But when you have a technique that you're applying, there's a few things that go on.

One is that whatever you're in, you're kind of directing the show about what you're paying attention to, often with the idea that you're trying to get something have some experience attain something, get calmer, blissful, concentrated, something trying to do something. And sometimes people do this and get into spiritual states, so called wonderful states. And that seems very fulfilling and proves it all solved worthwhile. But it's easy to have this also become kind of a bypass and end up not really being connected to oneself. But rather being connected to one one thing one wants to be firm with that, but what like what one would like oneself to be. And I know a lot of people who do these kind of bypass, and they ended up in kind of nice states, and they're kind and pleasant and peaceful in some way. But they're holding you can sometimes I can see how much they're holding at bay, you know, you know, all kinds of things, you know, there's a dam that's about to break sometimes. So to sit and do nothing, except to be maybe welcome, be welcoming, but sit and do nothing. And then notice what comes. And it turns out, the impression I have is that reality knows a lot better than you'll ever know. What you need to face, what you need to be present for. Things will start appearing, you sit down to do nothing, but pay attention. And you might notice, I can't be present. That's pretty good thing to know that your mind is going so fast, so distracted, so caught up so preoccupied, that the idea of sitting down and connecting to yourself is unimaginable because of the speed of the mind, engagement of the mind. That's an interesting piece of news. Left to itself, the mind won't settle down, be with itself. I had a friend, teacher have a friend who's a teacher, who was someone that went up much faster. What happens when you sit down to meditate? She was meditating for years and years and years. So she's kind of a great teacher. And so you think you finally find out what really goes on in meditation and the depths of meditation, what it's all about. And she said, all your unresolved issues will appear. I don't know if that inspired the people she stopped to talk to. But it isn't just your, your your unresolved issues, but all these unresolved things that are sitting there waiting, sometimes their emotions, sometimes there are memories that haven't been processed entirely. Sometimes there are beliefs and thoughts and movements of the mind and desires and aversions and all this stuff that's sitting there bubbling. And there's something very respectful of yourself and your inner life, to sit quietly and let it show itself to you. Come welcome. You're invited here, show yourself. And it's a lot easier to have that kind of welcoming idea to sit there and do nothing and let things show up. If you do feel that it's useful to do it, that it's beneficial to do it. And it's beneficial in a number of ways. One way it's really good to get to know yourself. And as possible, the things that are difficult to be with are the very things that most need you to pay attention. The mind that's busy and preoccupied and spinning out and very hard for it to be present is probably the mind that needs you more than it needs, then you need it. So you offer yourself to it here. I'll be with you. I'll pay attention to you. And it wanders off and you're saying I'm here. You're here. I'm here. But again, you're welcome. And you offer You're welcome. And you see what it shows. For a moment it will show you something and you do it again and again. And it's very respectful to yourself to feel like you're worthwhile connecting to and being present for. I grew up part of my growing up. I had friends who when I talked to them, they would not listen. It was painful to be friends like that. So I made up for it as my career. Hold forth these long monologues.

Captive audience. But anyway, so, you know, that's you know, but sometimes we don't do that for ourselves. We don't stop and listen to ourselves. And some of the things that hurt the most inside of us are the things that most need to be met and seen and hurt and be, oh, that's how it is. But it isn't just so it's very respectful, to meet ourselves and be with ourselves. It's also allows for something different to happen. It allows for healing, it allows for growth that allows for resolution, some of the unresolved things we have inside of us an innate capacity for healing, innate capacities for growing and developing, we don't have to be so much in charge to do it, we have to almost like we have to do is make space for allow what's in there to come up and bubble up. Even if it's kind of terrible, difficult to see and be present for. It's amazing what this heart of ours is mind of ours has the capacity to do. If we get out of the way, we get out of the way, get out of the way of it, but are very cognizant of what's going

on. We really notice it's really obvious what's going on, oh, we do nothing. Meaning we stay still required, we're still with it. In that stillness, we let things come and show itself. If we're swirling and very agitated, to the best of our ability, we stay still and just know it. It's in the knowing it's through the knowing that the innate capacities of the mind the heart, know how to work things through. It's also very respectful, meaningful, to me not feel like we have to be in charge all the time. Because the part of ourselves that we're conscious of, is just the tip of the iceberg of who we are. And so that often we judge ourselves by what we can know about ourselves. Often we take charge and take responsibility for that part that we know ourselves for, which is reasonable. But when I don't know what percentage you think of ourselves, we don't know. 5%. But do you think 5% of 40 8080 Going once,

I don't really know. But I actually suspect this, it was more than 80% that we don't know, I think it's just a very small percentage of what we do, which we know about ourselves, we actually, well, who we are that we're really conscious of. One of the interesting ways of seeing it, is even get quiet and still enough in meditation, yet to be somewhat quiet and concentrated and still. And so there's not very many thoughts going on. And but you're very attentive. And it's possible to start feeling the birth of a thought. And different people experience it differently. For me, it was like surface of water. And a bubble was it felt like a bubble was being to surface out of the water. But I was right there to notice it. And because I was noticing and seeing it, the bubble just returned to the water, it didn't bubble up into a thought bubble. So I knew I was about to think. But I was attentive to it before it became a conscious thought. So it dissolved. The consequences, I'll never know what that thought was going to be. That's a phenomenal thing. Because it means that my thinking began, begins upstage, out of sight. What's going on in there, I thought I was in charge of my thoughts and ideas and they began places where I don't know where they where it is inside. So when we sit and do nothing, it kind of gives a chance for us to discover and be with something it's deeper than what we can constantly consciously control constantly judge constantly think we know about ourselves. And a lot of that kind of deeper stuff that can begin unfolding and going is not necessarily cognitive. So it's not it doesn't necessarily belong to the world of understanding. Because a lot of the like our subconscious life plays itself out through our body, not through our mind. I think it was young you said young who said that the royal road to the unconscious dreams. After all these years of doing Buddhist practice. And now I think the royal road to the unconscious is your body. So if you can sit just be still and be aware and be present. Don't do anything except and notice what begins to bubble up, notice what happens know what's going on. So, if you do this, for example, you might first notice that your mind is out of control. And you sit there the best you can knowing and out of control mind. If you know it, it's kind of like you've given space breathing room for that out of control busy mind, it begins to settle. As it begins to settle, you might notice that all those swirling thoughts were connected to some kind of emotion. Maybe there was anxiety. And so now you know, something different, something maybe a little deeper, you know that there's an emotional base for all those thoughts. So then you sit with the anxiety, then as you sit there doing nothing, you notice that you don't like anxiety. Actually, you hate it. Even worse, you're afraid of it. And you want to pull away and go off anywhere in your thoughts. But to feel it. But your practice is just sit there and do nothing. So you say well look at that. It's a lot of a lot of reactivity in there. Because you know, the reactivity, it's kind of worthwhile after a while it doesn't grab you, it doesn't have control and it settles down. And then you're sitting there with the anxiety. And then you sit there and so it seems it, I'm feeling anxious. But now that I feel it, it really feels like a lot of energy and tightness in my chest, my belly. That's interesting. So feeling the chest in the belly, and that tightness. And as you feel it doing nothing, it begins to release and relax. And as it does, so doing some things, it goes away. And as it goes away, it's replaced with tenderness. Kind of a soft, tenderness, it feels like, very feels very vulnerable. So you sit with that, do nothing, be vulnerable. But that's a little scary. But then you then you know, they're thinking, Oh, that's interesting. I'm scared of my vulnerability. Okay, do nothing. Things keep unfolding. After a while the vulnerability feels like a little bit of kindness and love. But that reminds

you of all the betrayals in love that you've experienced in your life. It's too hard to stay there. Because who knows what will happen? It's not safe. That's interesting. Do you have that thought you had no idea.

And so you sit with that do nothing. You're not to make any conclusions not to do anything with it. You don't have to reject it or fix it. Just see how these things work. And then after a while, that gets quieter and still there. And then it just is quiet still. Kindness, softness, tenderness, peacefulness. That feels very satisfying and very content. Not much is going on.

But you're just here in your body for this feeling of satisfaction, contentment. And it turns out, after a while, it's very interesting. It's more compelling to stay with that than it is to be thinking. You can see your thoughts start up. Some, you know one of your favorite top 10 themes for thinking comes up. And you see it come up and it's still doing nothing. But you notice that there's some movement inside of you, that says, No, thank you. There's more interesting things to do here. This deep inner sense of being connected and present for myself the satisfaction, this tenderness, wow, this feels good. Why should I leave that to go kind of off, chasing or being involved with that thought. So there's many ways in which this unfolds, I just made up one scenario. And but what I'm trying to convey to you is the idea, just sit and do nothing. And let all the animals come and trust that that's valuable. Don't be afraid of it. Don't judge it. Don't feel you're wrong for whatever comes. sitting like this is meant to be one of the most permissive accepting things you can do for yourself ever. You have permission to feel and thing can be almost almost anything that a person could experience. As long as you sit still and don't move. You can have murderous rage. I sat here doing nothing. And I'm burning up in rage. Isn't that interesting? Let me sit with that. But I can't do that. That's that's like, you know That's not what spirituality is about. And Buddhism after all is but blissing out, or something. passivity that.

So there's a story of Milarepa, who's a Tibetan teacher Yogi hermit from long, long ago. And I probably I don't have the story so accurate but it's stories approximately like this. So he lived in a cave for a long time hermit. One day he left his cave high up in the mountains to gather some more nettles stinging nettle steed or something came back, and they were three horrendous looking ugly monsters. With an escape taking a presidency with fangs, sharp, like swords, dripping blood, eyes, they were glaring red and they said ice we smell the smell of a tasty monk. So for them, so there were there were three different sizes these monsters so the first one started to come towards Milarepa. And he held his ground and returned returned fierceness with fierceness all his personal power met there and that monster ran away the next one game. And so he tried that strategy again. And but this kept coming through so I better change strategies. So he offered his kindness and his love and wished him well and welcome him to the cave. And as he offered in this wonderful place, love and His kindness, his compassion. The monster just kind of got all soft and cuddly and curled up next to the cave and fell asleep. But then the biggest fiercest, most bad one came with all the mouth wide open with the sword like teeth, three feet long each tooth coming his big mouth and coming to get tasty monk. So he tried his fierceness. Nothing worked. He tried his kindness, it didn't work. This, this monster was coming closer and closer. So what did he do, he jumped right into the mouth. And when he did that, the dragon just vanished.

A friend of mine had a similar dream, where in the dream he was holding a poisonous snake by the neck. And that's a safe way to hold a poisonous snake because it can't turn around and bite you. But he didn't want to hold it forever. So he knew we had to let go of at some point. But if you let go of it, then the snake would be free enough to turn around and bite him. So he was kind of stuck in the dream he didn't know what to do. So finally, at some point in the dream, he did let go of the snake. And in the dream when they let go of the snake, the snake vanished. So it's both those stories are great. So

sometimes you just got to jump in into the teeth of the monster. So we have all kinds of things that happen that come visit us can we be you know, you don't have to jump in. But do nothing. That's equivalent to just sit there and be with it and see what goes on. And it's not just the unresolved issues. It's not just the difficult things. But some people what they're most kind of unwilling to be present for is what's what's most beautiful about themselves what's most wonderful, their capacity for love or kindness, their peace, to generosity, their their ability to let go in a meaningful way. There's all kinds of kind of wonderful parts of who we are. There's tremendous beauty in human hearts. And some people are reluctant to touch it or be with it. And so to sit and do nothing. When the time is right, those things will come and surface and you get to sit with that as well. And it turns out that the more you do this practice of doing nothing but pay attention and be present for what arises. At some point there's a tipping point. And we tend to go more and more to what is beautiful more and more to what's kind of health healthy and wholesome and skillful. within us, that becomes more the inner landscape. But you can't rush there, you have to kind of take the whole package as it is. and be patient and just be willing to sit and be with what is. And this is why it's very important for people who like this process, to do this, to sit every day to meditate regularly. Because only by their regular sitting of doing this over and over and over again, that all these different parts of ourselves, have a chance to show up and be there and begin to move into unfold into unravel and do what they need to do. It isn't something you do just once, and then you're done with it. So it's a you know, a lifetime practice or ongoing thing to let this happen. And you see it, you know, in a physical way, you can see it with people who sit regularly. Someone who's new to meditation, they're gonna sit cross legged on the floor, and then never done it before. And they can't get their knees down, their legs are crossed, and they're slumped over. And they kind of moving every few seconds. And you know, they're so uncomfortable. And then if they keep doing it every day, keep doing it. Then slowly, their knees come down. Slowly they start sittings. Still over their body, slowly, they stop, start sitting up straighter. And after about a year somebody sits every day, you start seeing they develop kind of a yogic body, they say, you know, meditators body, the body's more centered, more relaxed, and you can feel the whole different sense of presence in them. When they really feel that look at that person, that sense of presence just sitting there, they didn't have when they didn't have when they started. So that's physically the slow change emotionally, psychologically, mentally heartfully, there's all these different kind of elements of who we are, that have a chance to unfold and open and smooth out, work themselves out to unfold, grow in is very simple. Kind of unbelievably simple thing to do. It's rather unsophisticated. So if you want to do something sophisticated, you know, you kind of people don't really notice how powerful this is, I think it's one of the most powerful things a person can do for their inner life is to do nothing. Except be attentive to what's happening as you do nothing. Stay present, really present all look at this. Now it's this. Now it's this, look at this. Sit with it, be with it. And if sometimes it feels like you're sitting in the mouth of the dragon, just be content.

Sometimes, if you're sitting in some heavenly realm, be content, whatever it comes to speed with it, don't hold on to anything, because then you limit the process. Don't resist anything, then you limit the process, just be the be, at least in terms of a path to liberation, a path to real kind of inner growth. This is one of the really great ways, powerful thing to do. And the more thoroughly you can do nothing, the more powerful This is. Because you'll find there's all this reactions, all this doing in relationship to things, it's part of what you're going to learn, to recognize and to see. And I think of it as a kind of a homecoming. That is a process of coming home to ourselves. So with time, we start feeling very much at home, in ourselves with ourselves at ease comfortable with ourselves. And it feels like such a good place to be here to be with oneself to be connected. And it's probably it's going to start feeling better than the kind of connectivity that happens through a phone or through Facebook or something like that, not to say that those things are not good or useful. But they have their place. But But when we have something here, which is beautiful, precious, wonderful. A sense of being really comfortable, happy, joyful, peaceful, then that world of that kind of virtual world of connectivity will lose its older, won't seem

so important. And one of the reasons for that is that as you're more connected to yourself in a deep way you'll also end up becoming less selfish. It's the people who are disconnected to themselves that tend to be the most selfish. The people who are most connected here tend to be the ones who have the greatest capacity for one on one connectivity, where they can meet others and really feel connected, feel empathy, feel, feel, you know, ability to pay attention and be pay attention to and really feel and sense, connect to people as a whole. It's a valuable world to step into. So if you leave here today, with anything, I'm hoping it's nothing. I'm hoping it's the value of doing nothing. Except Sit down, sit up straight, maybe close your eyes. And try to have a heightened sense of presence heightened sense of really being here, for what's going on, heightened attention to what's here, that's all, as if that's nothing or small, small thing, just this year, and then do nothing and see what comes, see what animals visit you. And over time, you'll be you'll be visited by everything that you need to know everything you need to know about yourself, until you find yourself at home, here and deep way.

So when the Quakers have meetings, they think they kind of do nothing for a while, until someone has something to say. We have about 10 minutes with someone like to say or ask.

So I'm trying to reconcile this idea of sitting in the monster's mouth with right effort, which has this component of recognizing unwholesome mind states and making an effort to I don't want to say get rid of but let go of and they seem to be not meshing. And so I'm wondering if there's something some distinction I'm missing? Yeah, yeah,

I think doing that. Breaking up right effort, figuring out what to let go of how to really investigate, those all belong to the wonderful practices, they're more technique like practices. So those are good things to do, I'm not going to say I've benefited a lot from doing those things. So it's good thing to do. But if you following the talk here, don't do any of that. Just sit in the mouth and see what happens. So it's kind of like, okay, it's a little bit like wait and see. Except, you know, don't shouldn't be waiting. It just be with what's there. And then see what unfolds as you do that. Don't feel like you have to get rid of it. If there is a dragon for you, or some monster or something difficult. Temporarily put aside the idea that it should be that the needs to be different. And just say, okay, Here I am, here we are, it's you and me and see what happens. Keep breathing. Keep just noticing, just using what in a simple way don't go investigating don't like, you know, have learned something from me and some of the instructions I gave and apply them. Just just sit and just let it let it show itself to you. An image that keeps coming back in my head as I didn't say it yet, but it kept passing through as I was speaking was visiting someone who has a little bit of shy cat or a shy little kid. And you kind of have to not do anything. If you go directly up to a cat or a little kid, it's too much for them, but you have to be in the room with them. So you have to kind of sit there and not look at them and be a peaceful person. And then the kid will come. So some of these monsters are that way to some of these, you know and you sit in them, you have to be right in the in the you know, in you know, clenched between those sharp teeth, you know. And then really here now to sit here and do nothing. If you if you if you have the skill of learning how to do nothing, just sit with it and do it over and over again. Nothing will stay the same. It'll shift and change Is that an adequate answer for you? Or is this a work for you well enough, because your question was a good one. Yeah, good enough. Okay.

An image that keeps coming to me is, I was listening to another one of your talks today, Gil. And you said in it, you can't chop into a cherry tree to get at the blossoms, the cherry blossoms, you need the essence the wind to be, to, to be happening to and for the blossoms to come. And I'm also because this time of year, a lot of the trees don't have their leaves are losing them. But just because they don't have their leaves doesn't mean that they're not doing the work that is needed.

Right? Yeah, very good. And so they say this image of the cherry blossoms, you know, you can't, you can't chop into the tree in the winter and try to get the cherry blossoms out, you have to let the golden wind of spring kind of just caress the trees and warm the trees and their own time that blossoms will come. So we also sit with the warm, hopefully the warm wind of attention and just bring our attention, our presence to what goes on. And we let this inner unfolding to happen. As I think I said earlier, reality knows much better than you will ever know what needs to happen. And in the sense of, you know, in the in the context of doing this kind of practice here. So sit and meditate and be quiet and still and just don't do anything but be present. reality will kind of walk will know you can trust the process. And I think one of the great gifts I feel I've received from this doing as mindfulness practice is the tremendous trust that I've developed over time seeing over and over over again how well it works. That to trust this process of just just paying attention just being present for the experience. It just seems to be golden, how it kind of lubricates how it all facilitates this beautiful life kind of moving through and growing and the blossoms blossoming. So it might be maybe if you're frequently connected to your device, maybe keep a log, kind of how many times you check every day. And maybe if one and every 25 times a day that you check your device. Instead of checking it, you sit quietly for two minutes and do nothing. What will happen to you? It might be interesting to find out. So I hope you enjoy doing nothing. I hope it's more than enjoy. I hope that it's profoundly meaningful for you. Thank you