

Practice Notes: Not Stopping for Thoughts

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So maybe some simple ideas about practicing mindfulness this morning. If a person is riding a bicycle on, say, flat land, or maybe even better, it has a slight downward slope, and the person is a good rider, a good peddler, has good balance, but the person has one particular challenge. And that is, they automatically, habitually, unknowingly keep pressing the brake with their hand, you're pulling in that brake lever. And they're wondering why it's so hard to pedal. And they're wondering on the slope why they stop when there should be a downward slope that should be rolling. And then they eventually remember, oh, wait a minute, I have the brake on, and they let go.

But it's such a habit. It's so... They're constantly, as soon as they stop doing it, they pull in the lever again, and they don't remember even that they've done it. They're so preoccupied with, I don't know, something. And so they have to keep letting go, keep letting go, keep letting go, so they can roll. Meditation is a little bit like that, in that we, in some ways, many times, we always have the lever on, the brake on. And in a sense, we have to remember to release it.

So the present moment is always rolling along. The river of time that moves through what we call now is always moving, always changing. The direct experience of our life in the moment is a constant change, changing experiences, changing sounds, sights, smells, taste, touch, and the changing inner landscapes of life. Desires, emotions, aversions, intentions, thoughts, constantly shifting and changing. But many times we relate to our thoughts, our emotions, our desires as if we put the brake on. Like, okay, now we full stop for this. This is important. This is what I have to be involved in.

And we don't even know we do it, and we're stuck. We've stopped dead in the tracks of the present moment. We're not flowing along with the changing moment. We've taken now a detour and stopped and thrust off in order to think about the last 20 years of your life, or the next five years of your life or something. And so this metaphor of that, the way that we get involved in thoughts is, interrupts the way that we are rolling in the present. That we're sailing along, surfing along in the present.

And we have to let go of something, let go of the lever, let go of the tightness, the strain, the pushing, the searching, the wanting, the averting, that goes on, that keeps us engaged and mesmerized sometimes in the world of thoughts. So let go and return here. And if you're in the world of sounds, sounds are always changing and coming and going. If you're in the world of sight, seeing, it's always changing sights happening. If you're in the world of smells, it's changing and tastes are changing. Tactile sensations and what parts of the body sensations come up and reveal themselves change.

Even if there's intense pain that doesn't seem to be changing whatsoever, if you go right into the middle of it, you'll see it's a dance of sparkling sensations. And then your inner landscape is always changing. Every thought, if you think in sentences, all these different words go through. If you think in images, all these different images come through. There's constantly shifting and changing. See if you can, as you practice... Stay in the flow of change.

And to make it really simple, in meditation, we recommend you stay in the changing sensations of breathing, and then everything else. The walking, the changing sensations of the body as it walks, and everything else is changing. Stay close to change. Let your thinking mind become quiet. Don't stop for thoughts. So the bumper sticker for us is, I don't stop for thoughts. Thank you. So, thank you.