

## Practice Note: Being Aware vs Doing Awareness

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And then to offer you a few thoughts about mindfulness practice. So I think probably it's fair to say that most of you, all of you, have some experiences that are close to what I'm about to describe. Now today, it's going to be a warm day. It's already warming up. And you probably don't have to work at feeling the warm day. You go out there, and especially the sun outside, and your skin will pick up the warmth, and your nerves, and you'll feel the warmth, and your body will react to the warmth in some way.

You might start sweating, or your pores open up, or different things will happen. But I don't send you out there and say, go out there and get warm as fast as you can. You really work at it and really kind of pump it up to get warm from the sun. It's more of a, this is what the body does. You're out there and you just get warm. Or if it's a cold day, you'll get cold.

Because that's the climate, that's what the temperature is. If it's just a crack of dusk, a dawn, you might not see much color. You might see some vague shapes in the place you're in, but not much color. As the sun rises and there's more light, at some point you might see more color. And you don't have to work at seeing the color, you know, but it just, the color will become more obvious as you do it. In fact, you probably can't kind of willfully make yourself see more color before the light gets strong enough for the color to stand out.

And if you're there thinking, I have to be a really good color seer, and it's up to me to do it, then I'm going to really bear down and really see those colors. You probably get yourself a headache before the sun has risen. And it's just something you have to allow for. When people do mindfulness practice meditation, enough times the orientation towards it, the primary orientation, is this something I have to do? And some people, this whole idea of I have to do it, takes prominence. So we apply ourselves to be with the breath, we strain, we bear down, or we judge ourselves, you know, boy, I couldn't, can't even stay on one half a breath,

and my mind corners off in thought, and I'm doing it wrong, and I have to do better, and I only try to kind of really bear down and really try, stay, stay, stay.

And it's a lot of that kind of self-assertion, self-will, that with which we do meditation. What I'd like to suggest, that there is a place for that in meditation, but it's only a small percentage of what meditation is about. And so you don't ignore your role, your intention, your efforts to be present. But don't put so much credence in it. Don't put so much value in it, like that's where it's all about. The primary place is what you're experiencing when you sit down.

Arises in you like the warmth of the day or the light of the day arises and penetrates you and fills you and appears in you. It's more like the breathing, if you're focusing on the breathing, it's more like you're allowing the whole psychophysical system to reveal itself to you, to show up, like the body getting warm just shows up and reveals it's you. It's a hot day. You don't have to work on it. And so the will part, the part that you contribute, is to be there receptively, to be there openly, to be there, let's kind of, let's be the clearing of the clouds so the sunlight can do its work.

Let's make space here. Let's be open and available like the land is available for the light that comes when the sun rises. The land is very patient. The land is very allowing. It's not in a hurry. But the land allows the light to appear. Eliminates everything.

So the will part is a lot, can be a lot about this showing up in an allowing way, in a receptive way, to this whole other process that's part of our psychophysical makeup, which is more something that arises by itself than something that we're doing. And what might happen, might take a while, like if you're focusing on the breathing, that more and more the breathing is liberated from the ways that we breathe forcefully, or the ways we're trying to accomplish breathing, or doing something, and trying to make something happen. And it can get very, very subtle, how our doing, like, you know, in the mind affects the breathing. Breathing is very receptive to all the changes in things. You know, if you suddenly had to jump out and run out of here because the building's burning down, your breathing would engage in a very different way. But if you start thinking about, imagining the building is burning down, your breathing might just, that is enough to get the breathing to speed up and go deeper.

Because, you know, it's physiological, we're now responding to an imagination. If we think that I'm the one who's up, it's up to me to apply myself and work hard, the breathing will somehow gear up and get involved. But if we can just get out of the way and just allow breathing to arise like the like the body gets warm, the breathing gets freer and freer, simpler and simpler. And there's a wonderful feedback loop there about how to be present in a very peaceful way. So maybe as you go through your walking meditation, sitting meditation,

maybe you can start being a little bit more attuned than you have been perhaps on this other half of the equation, which is not what you have to do, but what's being done to you by just sitting there from the inside out.

And if what I'm saying doesn't have any meaning for you, you have no way of relating to it, you're more than welcome to forget what I said. And practice your way. This is not required to follow along what I just said, but if it's somehow something that's interesting for you, you might find it interesting for this morning to play with it. Thank you.