

Practice Notes: Mindful Meditation - What to include

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One of the, I think, wonderful questions to ask yourself if you're a mindfulness practitioner is the question, what are you ignoring here and now? What are you not paying attention to here and now? What is it that you're not including that if you included you would actually be more here? The kind of simple example of such a thing would be that maybe some of you've had this experience, something equivalent to maybe you're having a difficult conversation with someone and you're caught up in the conversation and all the things. And then maybe the person you're with or someone else observing just says, excuse me for a moment, but I just want to name something. It seems like both of you are really tense.

And as soon as someone names it, everyone relaxes. Oh yeah, we are. Shoulders sink a little bit, they settle back more. Okay. And so they weren't including in the attention all the tension they had because the conversation was so important. The words had to be said.

But how the person was, was not included. So the same way when we said to meditate or practice mindfulness in daily life, ask them the question for yourself. Step back yourself and get the kind of the observer's view and what am I not including? What am I not seeing here of what's happening here, right here, and now? And in what ways maybe are we ahead of ourselves because we're thinking about the future, or what's going to happen, or what we want to have happen?

To what degree are we kind of behind ourselves because we're still living in the thoughts about the past and what's happened? To what degree are we so involved in our thoughts that we don't even know that we're involved in our thoughts? So to take the time to ask the question, what am I not including here? What am I ignoring? Gives you the space maybe to step back and take a bird's eye view. How am I right now?

What's going on right now? And then, once you recognize it, the second half, a really important part of mindfulness practice, once you know what you've been excluding, what you're not paying attention to, about here and now, how you are, is once you've recognized it, can you now add or change or take another step? And recognize it or know it, name it, in a way that is relaxed, that is open, that's spacious around it. It isn't like, oh no, I'm a terrible person because I'm tense. Oh tense, now I get even more tense because I'm a meditation teacher and I shouldn't be tense. It's like, oh tension, that's what's happening.

So, in that second step, not just know what's there, but the second step to know it in a nice way. To know it in a way that's nice for you to know it. Like you're your friend, your own friend. Oh, there's tension. Oh, I'm remembering this difficult conversation yesterday. Remembering. That's what's happening. Oh Gil, you're remembering. As opposed to, you know, you should know better. You've been doing meditation for decades and you should not be caught up in the past.

And this is an embarrassment to the Buddhist religion. No, no, that's not friendly. Oh Gil, there you are remembering. Right now, here and now, you're remembering. That's what's happening. In the present moment, that's what remembering is like.

This is how it is. And as you remember, look at that. There's actually tension around your eyes. And, oh, tension around my eyes. Isn't that interesting? And the tension relaxes.

And then there's relaxation, a little bit. And then that's what's happening now. And I recognize, oh, relaxation. That's good. As opposed to, maybe I'm not supposed to relax. Whatever.

So two steps. What are you excluding? What are you ignoring? What do you need to recognize to be fully here, more fully here? And once you recognize what that is, how can you find a way to know it that's friendly, that's simple? Just very, very simple. Maybe so something deeper relaxes in you. So thank you for being here and I look forward to meeting those of you who signed up for the practice discussions.