

Practice Notes: Doing Nothing First

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So to offer you a few words about the practice, maybe they would support you through this morning, is I think it's fair to say that a fair number of people when they do mindfulness practice, they interpret it as being something they're supposed to be doing. And if that's the case... And then sometimes just adding one more doing to a long to-do list that they have. You know, it's 10, 12, I'm supposed to know that I'm breathing. And so you know that, and then you go on thinking, we have other things to do too, right, like plan your dinner tonight. So off you go to do that.

You know, you're going to your to-do list, always doing something. And so just one more doing and self-improvement doing, fixing things doing, getting away from things doing. Okay. Mindfulness does have a doing that's part of it, but it's usually best to do it after you stop doing. Or mindfulness has a lot to do with not doing. And the reason for not doing is to create space, to create room in the mind, in the body, in the present moment for something to arise, something to create the conditions that welcome some of the natural unfolding movements of breathing, of knowing, of the body, the heart, to kind of unfold on its own.

We have amazing natural, we are amazing natural systems. So I like to use the analogy of if you have a little, like, small cut in the kitchen from nicking yourself with a knife. If you pick on that little cut, it'll get bigger and bigger and worse and worse until you get gangrene. They cut off the finger. And if you keep it dirty, even more so. But if you keep it clean... and maybe covered with a band-aid and leave it alone, an amazing natural process has a chance to operate.

And that is, it'll heal itself. And it's a complicated biochemical, hormonal event, this healing of the little cut. We couldn't engineer it for ourselves. But we have a role, and the role is to ensure that nothing interferes with that natural process. So we keep it clean, we keep it

covered, we keep it, you know, we stop ourselves from picking at it. So the same thing with our hearts, same things with our inner spiritual life, our inner life, we have stopped picking at it, and we have to keep it kind of clean.

And mostly what that means is just don't do anything. And it's kind of like you make a silent mind so the deeper voice has a chance to speak. It's kind of you make the inner life very still, not to freeze up, flight and freeze kind of thing, but rather softly so that the stillness, the deeper movement that has no chance in the ordinary running around being busy has a chance to surface. Yes. So we start by, in some ways, radically not doing anything when we practice. What am I supposed to do? Nothing.

Except sit there and be still, maybe close your eyes, and kind of make room, almost like we're clearing the space, and then the mindfulness can begin. And it's almost like the mind wants to know, the mind wants to be aware, And then you start noticing what you're aware of. If it's a breathing, which is a natural process, which is a wonderful stabilizing place to pay attention to, don't rush to do the mindfulness of breathing. Make space so that the intimacy, the integrated way in which the experience of breathing can be known and knowing is connected to the breathing can begin happening more on its own. You don't have to be the doer of it. What your job is to be the allowor of it.

Your job is to be the create the conditions, the openness that allows that intimacy of knowing and breathing, awareness and breathing to coexist and flow into each other and through each other and inform each other and get centered and involved in the simplicity of this natural process. So maybe if what I said today makes sense to you, then you might try the experiment with seeing how you can do less so there's more mindfulness. And if what I'm saying doesn't make any sense at all to you, you're welcome just to forget it. I hope you enjoy your morning here. Thank you.