

From Aboutness to Sensing

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So I'll introduce this next sitting with this idea that when we're thinking, we're usually thinking about something. But in that way, about something is not the thing. It's a little bit removed, or very removed if it's about what happened today, 10 years ago, or about what might happen in a week. But there's a way in which thinking is always about something. It always has a kind of a focus in it, something that's the object of the concern. And if we spend too much time living in the world of aboutness, we are less in the world of aliveness.

And some people get lost in the world of aboutness. And if it's really, really, you know, completely in a world of aboutness, sometimes people wonder about your mental state. And so there's a way we're shifting here. It's okay to be thinking about things. It's not like wrong to do that unless you're lost in it too much. But it's not where we're living, it's not what we're focusing on here.

So if you find yourself thinking as we're meditating, take a moment to recognize that this isn't just thinking, this is abouting. You're living in the world of abouting. It's all about abouting something. And what we want to do is to shift the attention to sensing, the world of sensing, the world of very simple knowing, experiencing what's happening.

And so if we're having some pain as we're meditating, maybe the knee hurts, we relate to it through the world of aboutness. We start thinking about the pain and predicting what's going to happen and what we prefer and what should I do about it. But that's actually a little bit removed. And within reason, what we're trying to do here is to shift from that to allow ourselves to feel and sense that knee pain in a way that's calm, a way that's not reactive, and a way that's not agitated. In a certain kind of way, I like to say, that allows it to be there, it's okay. Okay.

And what we're doing is we're finding our peace, finding equanimity, finding a calm way to know it. Calmly, just know very simply, just what it is without a story, just what it is, feel it and sense it. Try to do that calmly. And so part of the practice, part of the orientation, part of the discovery here is not just about something happening. But part of the exploration is, can we know, be aware, can we be present with whatever is here in a calm way?

So attention, awareness, often has a subject. Or some people call it the object. The attention, the subject might be the breathing. But we can stay in that way of being with the breathing as if we're mostly concerned about the breathing. Right, and we're in the control tower and relating to it, that, oh, meditation is about the breathing, and it should be this way and that way.

We're trying to shift that to be more intimate and to just allow the experience of breathing to arise and be present in awareness, in perception, in a calm way. And so that we're not so removed, we're not about something. I hope this makes enough sense. Just enough. Yes. But you could have to speak very loud for me.

Okay, thank you. Yeah, I have a baby this year. You have a what? I have a baby this year. And one thing I noticed is that they cry a lot. So any discomfort in it or pain, they cry. So I feel one blocker for me to find peace or the discomfort. Yeah, but... human nature. Yeah.

So you have a baby who cries sometimes. Like, that's what they do. So I learned that human cry when there is a conversation. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, and if you're the mother, your job is to, your job as a mother is not to just sit there meditating and ignoring that. Your job is to listen to that cry and to discern what's being communicated.

Because yes, baby cry, but babies cry in many different ways. So it's possible to hear when the baby is crying in distress and needs something, and when the baby is crying, it's okay to leave the baby alone. And it's better for them to self-soothe, to find their own way with it. And you have to be able to really be very attentive to the different communication that's going on in the crying. And if you don't do that, then just go take care of the baby. Don't meditate.

I think my question is around, right, if I feel the knee pain or any discomfort in my meditation. Yeah. I have the, I will feel bad or unnervy or negative. That what? I will feel bad about it. How could I find you? Yeah. Well, that's what we're doing here.

So let's practice it and see. So this is what I'm saying here is part of that path of finding it. But if you think you're injuring yourself, then change your posture. But if you're not injuring yourself, sometimes it's good to explore, can I be with this in a different way? Can I be with it without reactivity? Can I be without being caught in my story about it and the meaning of

it? How simple can I be? How simple can I be?

So let's try it. So if you can assume your meditation posture and gently close your eyes. And in this difference between aboutness and the lived experience, how is your body experiencing itself now? And as you experience yourself, as the body is having its own experience, how can you know that calmly? Like a parent might stay very calm, extra calm when the baby is crying. To know, to be present.

Even if you're agitated, it's okay. Okay. Let yourself, let the body experience the agitation. Allow it to be there in the body. Don't live in the about the agitation. And then know, sense the agitation calmly. Like you're giving room for it to be there. It's okay.

And then within that body, seeing what happens to the body's experience of itself, take some fuller breaths, maybe long, slow, deep inhale. So there's kind of a richer, deeper sensing of the torso, the breathing torso. And an exhale that's a little longer than usual. So there's more time to relax, settle. And then letting the breathing return to normal.

And allow yourself to experience the body's breathing. And without trying hard, there's some way you can invite a calmness, a calm knowing, a calm sensing, a calm presence for the body breathing. If you get involved in thoughts, it's okay. Know that calmly, but know also that you're in the world of aboutness. That's a little bit of a, often a virtual reality.

And then shift back to the lived reality of the body breathing, relaxing the thinking mind, settling into the body as you exhale. In the few minutes left in the sitting, if it's easy for you, see if you can also recognize clarity. As you know you're breathing calmly, as you know what's happening calmly, can there also be a certain kind of clarity in that knowing? Clarity in the sensing and feeling, calm, clear awareness, calm, clear knowing. If you find yourself thinking, calm, clear, knowing of thinking.

And then to end the sitting, to calmly and clearly have a few deeper breaths, can calmly and clearly, feeling and sensing more fully your body, feeling your chair, your floor, remembering where you are at IMC. And when you're ready, you can open your eyes.