

Body Supporting Mind

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So the practice, it's a little bit loud. Let's see. So how's that? Is that okay for you? It was a little bit echoey for me. So the... So...

And as I grew up in meditation here in the United States, there used to be, the common thing people would talk about was how the distinction between the mind and the body in the West was overdone. It was really like a hard separation between the two, and that the people would say, in Buddhism, there's no separation. That's all one, kind of. So that was nice. But then I started learning about Buddhism, learning the ancient Buddhist teachings, and they also have a distinction between mind and body. And they hold that distinction as being valuable.

There's different domains of life, and some of it is the domain of your foot, the other is your hand, domain of your eyebrows, the domain of your mind, of your body. They're all included. And so in Buddhism, rather than saying that they're kind of sharply separated, or that they are one, what I see is that they're cooperating. They work together. And what we want to do is to learn to have them work together in some way.

And so we find that teachings, ancient world, where they talk about there's distinct forms of tranquility, there's tranquility of the body, and there's tranquility of the mind. And they have a very different feeling. How they're experienced. There is equanimity of the body, equanimity of the mind. There's joy of the body, joy of the mind. They each have their own kind of distinct way of being, and they both have a role in different times.

Different ones of them are more pronounced. But generally, for most people, they are too much in the mind. And learning to wake up in the body is a huge part of this practice. Occasionally I meet people who are too much in their body, but it's kind of rare. But sometimes there's people who are so into their body, dependent on their body, navigating everything

through the body. But it's kind of like they're part of their intelligence, their thinking mind or something, it's like offline.

And it's a little bit naive or it's a little bit simplistic or something. So the idea is to have them in partnership, working together back and forth. But one of the, so as I said, there can be both tranquility of the mind and tranquility of the body, equanimity of the body, equanimity of the mind. But for many people, it's one of the great values of being connected in your body is the body can be stabilizing. The body can provide a certain kind of stability, a certain kind of equanimity, balance. It's somehow easier to experience that in the body sometimes than in the mind.

And that stability of body then informs the mind, that there's something here is stable, something here is calm, there's a balance here, there's a stability, there's a steadiness here, there's a groundedness here that can be very reassuring for an anxious mind. And some people have anxious minds or anxious hearts. And so one of the uses of the body is to be careful with your posture. And can you find a posture that feels stable. Not just a posture that's comfortable.

Like you sit in the couch and you take the most comfortable posture you could is just kind of like the collapse into the couch. You know, kind of almost like a, I guess it's called a couch potato. And, but... you know, but rather to take a posture which, on the couch or the chair or something, that, so let's, what would be a stable posture? What would be a balanced posture? What would be an equanimous posture?

What posture can I put myself in here so that I have some stability, physical stability? And, and so, I mean, I've seen it myself that, um, sometimes I've been uncomfortable, and I sit down, and I kind of sit at an angle in the chair. I cross my legs, you know, with my hands like this, you know, because I have an attitude. And I don't even know I have it, the attitude. And, but I've learned to pay attention to my posture and notice when my posture is imbalanced.

When my posture is not in a way that it's balanced, stable, in a clear way that I'm here for this event. And so then I'll adjust my posture and have that stability. So if you find yourself anxious, restless, distressed, in some way, kind of in balance in some way, and then you're trying to navigate that only through your mind, it might take a long time. And you don't have to feel stable in your body to assume a stable posture, a balanced posture. And so you can kind of act your way into stability by what you do with your posture.

Find a balanced posture. If you're standing, have both feet firmly in the ground and really kind of feel your weight going through up your legs, into your hips, and up into your torso. And really kind of feel the stability. Find it balanced. Really kind of have the center of gravity

or the foundation be your feet and their weight of the body against the feet.

I mean, it's phenomenal what can happen if you have to feel that groundedness and stability. And so sometimes the posture is a doorway into your body, and your body is a doorway for the mind and the heart to have a shift. And if you're only trying to solve things through your mind, you might be doing it for many years. Sometimes I get the sense that the mind is like a labyrinth, a maze, that there's no exit. And... or many years ago, I read an analogy, a metaphor for the mind.

It was, you know, they had these, I guess they're called, I think maybe they're called like rainbow wings, these freeway on-ramps and off-ramps that kind of, but rather than getting you off the freeway, they just feed into each other. So it's endless on-ramp and off-ramp. As soon as you get off one, it puts you on the on-ramp from the next one, and you can never get off the... Sometimes the mind is that way. And the way to get off the freeway is through the body.

It's really kind of, okay, here I am. And sometimes the body also reveals what's going on for you better. If you take a stable, a semblance of a stable, alert, balance, posture... Only then do you really start feeling how much anxiety there is. Only then do you really feel the restlessness or the fear or the grief or the sadness that might be there, that somehow giving in to the busy, restless mind masks and hides or doesn't reveal what's happening here in a good way.

So the posture can support you. The posture in the same way can support mindfulness. Mindfulness, we use the word mind for mindfulness, and I don't know if that was the best choice for the Pali word *sati*, but be as it is, mindfulness, the mind, the part of the mindfulness, can be very much supported by what you do with your body. And there too, I've seen people who are navigating mindfulness practice only through their mind. Sometimes there are people who misunderstand the instructions, and what they're practicing is thoughtfulness, thoughtfulness.

They think that thinking is what mindfulness is. I just think about everything. And that's not quite right. And so what's a mindful posture? What posture do you have that brings with it alertness, attentiveness, awareness?

Yes. How are you more present in the circumstance you're in? So there's a natural sense of attentiveness to it. And there's lots of postures which diminish how attentive you are to the situation, sometimes intentionally, I mean not consciously intentionally, but sometimes we assume postures that are pulling us back. We're resisting.

We're not really wanting to be in this situation. And you can tell sometimes in people's posture that, you know, they're not really here. And, but if you want to be mindful, how about being really here with your body? Really, again, balanced, upright, alert, kind of a stable posture that from the feet all the way up to your head, that you're really there. You're there to pay attention, really to be aware.

And... And so it's a way of using your body as a support that doesn't require a lot of sophistication, doesn't require a lot of technique, doesn't, you know, it doesn't require a lot. Just put yourself in a different posture, a posture of stability, a posture of calm, a posture of attentiveness, a posture of care for people you're caring for. A posture of interest for people who you're paying attention to, a posture of just mindfulness.

So those are my thoughts for today. And may your body be your monastery, your meditation center, your temple, for navigating this practice. Thank you.