

Less is More

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So I think what's mostly at this moment on my mind is a little saying that's only three words. Sometimes it's good to keep these short sayings in your back pocket. And this one is less is more. Less is more. And that for this practice of ours, the mindfulness practice, it's probably a very good thing to keep in mind. Less is more.

And do less. Want less about the practice. Don't think of it as a lot you have to do. If you're caught up in all the things you need to do, think about less as more. Maybe do less in this practice. If you think you have to have certain attainments in this practice, I have to get super concentrated by Sunday, maybe less is more.

If there's something about why that less is more is that some of this practice is getting out of the way of the natural unfolding, the natural movement that our system has to homeostasis, to balance, to opening up, to freedom. And if we do a lot, then we don't trust the natural unfolding that's possible through this practice. If we do a lot, not only we don't trust it, but we might interfere with it. We might... And so there's a story that I'm very fond of, and maybe I've said it too often, but the story of the young man, who was very smart, capable, accomplished in the world, could do almost anything he set his mind to do. But none of it really kind of was deeply satisfying for him.

So he decided to go to the monastery and go be a monastic. And so he went to talk to the abbess of the monastery. And, you know, he would like to come. And so he asked her a question. You know, I'm... if I come to the monastery and practice, you know, seriously, how long will it take for me to be enlightened? And she said, 10 years.

And he said, oh, but, you know, I'm quite capable. I'm smart. I can apply myself. I'm really able to really give myself over 100% and really put myself into it. How long will it take if, you know, for someone like me who's so... And she said, oh... In that case, it'll take 20 years.

So this idea that making too much effort, being too much self-involved, and me, myself, and mine, I'm the agent, I'm the one who's going to do it. It's up to me. I'm the victim. I'm the one who's having so much trouble. All this me, myself, and mine is actually doing more, not doing less. And so part of that doing less is not being so self-focused.

Like it's up to me, I'm responsible, I have to do it. Of course you have to show up to practice. But less is more. So maybe trusting the practice more, trusting showing up, trusting the present moment. Just that. Trusting the present moment.

And then notice... Actually, there's two parts to it. Trust the present moment and notice when you don't. And every time that your mind spins off, means you trust that more than the present moment. You might trust solving your problems, trust having fantasies, trust remembering the past. You think that's where it's at, that's where it's interesting, but that's not trusting the present.

Trusting the present more than anything else and then see what takes you away. You'll learn a lot about yourself, and you might eventually learn that it's really special to be in the present. And less is more means just stay with the simplicity of just now. And then let's see what unfolds, see what opens, see what reveals itself in that process.

This kind of similar principle was taught by a *Vipassanā* teacher that I met in India, and named Manindraji, he was a teacher for some of the first Western *Vipassanā* teachers who started teaching in the West. And one of his sayings was, if it's not simple, it's not *Vipassanā*. So they said, yes, be simple, be simple with a practice. Simply show up, simply be there present. Don't make it a big, complicated thing to figure out. Don't try to make it...

Don't even make this mindfulness practice a technique. As soon as you have an idea that's a technique, you're probably making it more complicated than it needs to be. It's not a technique. It's a natural capacity to be present, to be aware. Can you trust that? Come back to that.

Or to say another way, get out of your own... Get out of the... get out of way of your awareness. It's very hard to not be aware. I mean, you can go to sleep. You can check out and watching Netflix or something, I suppose, that in some ways you're not aware.

But if you just, like, sit down on a park bench and tell yourself, stop being aware, you know, it's, I mean, what's your whole system going to do? You can close your eyes, but can you close your ears? Can you close your tactile sensations? And the whole awareness systems we have as a human being kind of operate... naturally on their own, where they are telling them to do it. Can we trust that and not harness it for a technique?

This is what I'm supposed to do. Trust awareness. Trust the simplicity. Get out of the way. Let the natural movement of the *Dharma*, natural movement of healing, natural movement of moving towards freedom to operate.

And it's kind of a simplistic... metaphor that I like, analogy I like very much for this movement towards freedom that Buddhism is trying to encourage is that is that if you hold on to a lot, if a lot of tension in your body, if you hold your hand and a fist really, really hard and you insist you're going to do this forever now, it's actually hard to do it forever, because inherent in a tight fist is a lot of effort. Continual effort has to go into it. Continual sense of intention and purpose. And if you get distracted, the fist is naturally on its own. It's going to begin to releasing.

So you have to remind yourself all the time. But if you leave it alone, don't remind yourself that the fist will begin to open up. It'll relax. There's a movement towards relaxing, just like there's a movement of a ball to roll downhill. And so freedom is just the release of all the tension.

And Buddhism has a little bit more sophisticated way of talking about that process, because, you know, that's a little bit not religious enough. Just relax. But a lot of it is just that freedom, the natural process, deeper and deeper and deeper ways, leaving things alone, leaving things alone, getting out of the way, letting the natural unfolding, natural relaxing, natural opening occur. So less is more. So with that I should stop speaking, speaking. And I'll mess it up any more than I have. So those are my thoughts. And now we'll do the...