

Natural Settling

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And then to say a few words about the practice this morning, one of the, I think, very special aspects of mindfulness practice that practitioners discover sooner or later is how much can happen in meditation without you trying to do it. That you create the conditions for something profound to begin unfolding within you. And rather than being the doer, the one who is responsible to make something happen, that's often a very different orientation than people have in their daily lives, where being the doer, fixing things and changing things and bettering ourselves, maybe it's something we can engage in actively. Right?

But here, certainly we have to engage in the practice. But one of the ways of seeing it is the engagement is to make a breathing room for our experience, or to make space, to make a space of awareness, to simply be aware of what's happening and then see what happens in that awareness. If awareness is like space, what happens in that space? If you simply know, simply are mindful, simply feel what's happening, what follows from that? That is not your doing.

So, for example, if you have a busy, very active life that's kind of tense, and you suddenly have to sit down to meditate and just notice what's happening without doing anything more, you might notice your body is tense. And if you sit and do nothing but pay attention to that, or with your breathing, the natural movement is the tension will release. Maybe not all of it, but some of the surface tension you have will let go and relax. Instead, you notice you're tense and you look at your stopwatch and it's kind of like, "I'm in a hurry here. I better relax quickly," and race through all the muscles to relax them. You probably get even more tense.

And the idea is to really discover how much the body takes care of itself. Sometimes, if you leave your thinking mind alone and only watch it, only know and make breathing room to see and feel the thinking, rather than participate in your thinking, it's remarkable to see the

same thing happens. The thinking mind tends to quiet down on its own. And in doing these two things, letting the body relax, letting the mind relax, what we're ceasing, what we're stopping doing, is participating in the tensions, participating in the thoughts, participating in the emotions by feeding them.

And mindfulness is a stepping away from the participation, to just let, to make space for things to be left alone and feel and know what they are. And that allows some deeper movement of release, of letting go, of opening up to happen. And sometimes when we do this kind of leaving ourselves alone, there are things that need to surface. And sometimes there are, you know, emotions that have been ignored that need to come up. And that's what we have to make space for.

Sometimes it's some of our beautiful qualities that can arise. Experiences of kindness, of love, of generosity, of wisdom. All kinds of things can come and bubble up, but if you watch it and see that you're not the doer of it, you're the allower of it. You're the one who's making space for it. And something about not participating actively in things, but simply kind of stepping back and opening up the field of awareness to see what a remarkable thing that is.

So as you do your walking and sitting today, here this morning, if what I'm saying makes some sense to you, you could try it. And one of the supports we have for this is just staying with the breathing. The one thing we participate with is accompanying, attending our breathing. Because if you do that, then you begin leaving everything else alone, which is not what we usually do. So for the time being, you use the breathing as support to just leave things alone and let them settle on their own. And then at some point you can let go of the breathing too.

Anyway, so I hope you enjoyed the day, and I look forward to meeting those of you who have signed up for the rest of our time together.