

## Noticing Becoming

**Gil Fronsdal**

**April 21, 2026**

**Keywords:** becoming, clinging, grasping, non-clinging, selfing, tranquility, sense door, Buddha, Zen, knowledge and vision

---

So this morning, do it a little bit differently in offering kind of instructions around knowledge and vision, becoming, how things come into being moment by moment. I want to talk a little bit first and offer you some what could be called pointing-out instructions. And part of the value of really pointing you in a particular direction for practice, for awareness, is that, using an analogy, if you want to have grape juice, you shouldn't be trying to squeeze gravel. So it's possible to somehow focus on the wrong place in practice, something that won't lead to freedom. So I want to begin with some examples here, and some of them you might want to be looking at me while I do it. I know some of you already want to meditate.

So we have up here on the stage an object, a cylindrical object, that in English we usually call this a striker. And the striker has the word striker and strike, something that you strike with. It's a little bit of a violent idea. It has a certain kind of resonance in effect, maybe, that maybe it's innocent enough, but we have this name, this word that we assign to it. And it's practical to do that. We know, if you ask someone to bring me the striker, they know what you mean, the bell striker.

But we could have chosen a different word in English. We could have called it the greeter, the bell greeter. They have a very different feeling if we call it the greeter. And if you hold it in your hand and you're greeting the bell, or the grazer, it's grazing the bell. And, you know, you could even, maybe if you're a little bit crazy like Gil, you could call it the kisser. Just kiss the bell.

Or you could not call it anything. When I went to my Zen master on a retreat once, deep in the retreat, I asked him some question. I don't remember what it was. He kept surprising me with his answers to me. But this time he picked up the smooth black round stone and handed it to me to hold. That was his answer. Of course, some years later I understood that

was profound, but I was kind of young and uneducated, didn't know what he was trying to do.

But, you know, we don't have to even have a word for this object. Something simpler happens. Maybe there's not any of that resonance that the label, the word, adds to it. Just feel the smoothness, the roundness, the size. But then something interesting happens when we kind of step away from what it means, the name, and we can hold it, and we can hold it, and we can grip it. Gripping it really takes work, and we can feel the work, maybe even the pain of gripping.

We could also let go of it. And if I let go a little bit now, it'd make kind of a loud noise, just drop it. Thank you, I'm free of it. But it's kind of disturbed all of you at this point in the retreat. You could also let go this way. You're letting go not of the greeter. You're letting go of the clinging to the greeter. This is another way of letting go, letting go of the clinging, the grip.

To be there right in the becoming of phenomena, the experience, and to really be sensitive to the becoming of clinging, gripping, grasping. To be right there at the becoming of, in the mind, we create the greeter. This object, in and of itself, is not a striker, is not a greeter, not a grazer. It could be used for other things and have other names. Or if a human being from 50,000 years ago saw this object, they would have no reference of it being used for bells or for anything. They might kind of poke around the ground, see if it's a ground scraper. Who knows what they would do with it?

But to be free a little bit, to see through the name, to not be stopped by it. To see the name is just a becoming, sometimes silently, maybe without even a word appearing in the mind. But just to see it arise, the idea, the sense, and see through it to just that, that it's the becoming in that moment. In a sense, you're bringing into being the striker, the greeter, kind of unconsciously because it's so automatic, seems so natural, but you're giving birth to it. It's possible to open your—I've been up here on the stage and opened my eyes after a good sitting and seeing the objects in front of me, and I could see the birth of the objects in my mind, in that sense. Oh, that's a striker, that's a clock.

But there was a before, before that assigning of something to it. And to begin allowing for that before, to see the birth, the arising, the becoming in this very deep way, and then to have it look at, to include the arising, the becoming of clinging, of grasping. To feel the flow of change that happens so that we see that anytime we grab onto an idea, a story, an idea, that we're actually in some ways blocking or freezing or stopping our participation in the flow of change. It's kind of like you're in the river of change. Hey, you jump up on the shore and now you're no longer in the flow. Oh, you're in your part of the river. But you turn your part

into ice and it doesn't flow until the sun comes out and melts that ice and returns into the flow.

So these are all things that we can feel and sense. We could sense stepping out of the flow, stopping, not being there. And right there we're seeing clinging. Right there we're seeing holding onto something. And we don't have to really let go of anything. There's no thing which is a problem or an enemy. No thing inside of ourselves. We can just release the clinging, open the hand of the mind, open the heart, to return to that flow of becoming. Stay close to it.

So with that as an introduction, to return into your body, to return to this body that is the real meditation home. Some of you might see this body as the temple or the sacred grove in which the Buddha is sitting, returning here. And if the excitement of thinking or activity can just create any swirling energy or activating energy, lifting energy or tension in the body, as you exhale, relax, settle. Recognize whatever degree of tranquility might be here, and calmly relax into the tranquility. Maybe letting it spread, and there might be somewhere in the body, maybe with the breathing, a settling place, a stabilizing place that stabilizes the mind, so you can do some calming of your mind. The calming that may come with an expanding of the mind outward into the boundaryless space around you.

In this knowledge of becoming, it's not something to chase after. To take some time now to notice what sensations, what experiences appear in your awareness with no effort on your part. It might be something that was unexpected, so you're not prepared for it or expecting it or thinking about it. Maybe there's a little buzz of vibration in your back or in your hands that just appears. If you don't direct your mind in any direction at all towards anything, it might be, at different moments, different things randomly appear, effortlessly. You're not trying, you're not searching, you're not directing the mind.

Kind of spend some time resting, allowing whatever arises effortlessly. Whatever it comes to be for a few moments, some things might persist. That's okay. But for this exercise, just stay open. Whatever new and unexpected things come into your awareness. Sometimes a sound, sometimes a body sensation, sometimes a thought. It doesn't matter what thought it is. Effortlessly, you know there's a thought.

Sometimes it's an emotion, feeling. And if you don't stare at anything but let your inner awareness, inner eye, just kind of float and be available, effortlessly, your awareness might move to different parts of the body, different sense doors. Effortlessly something new will arise. And then the sense door receives it. The name that we have for it is not so important.

It's fine for the name to arise. But for a few minutes here, just be aware of that effortless quality, that certain things arise in awareness, the effortlessness of appearing, of becoming.

Maybe where the effortless arising gives birth to a clarity of awareness of that thing, that event. Sometimes what comes into awareness is pleasant, sometimes unpleasant. Doesn't matter. Let the awareness of it all be effortless, flowing and moving. And if you're aware of what arises effortlessly, maybe there's also a sense that it arises without self. It arises without any self-reference. The sound of my voice requires no self, no self-reference for you. Just a sound arises.

Maybe a thought arises effortlessly. You might then get involved, apply effort. Know that, and know and recognize how that takes you out of the flow, becomings. In the effortless way that new becomings appear, they can appear without any sense of self in them. Or a self, a sense of self, can also become, arise, and be a companion. And if there's a lot of selfing, it's like stepping up on the dry shore, stepping out of the river of change.

And maybe what arises effortlessly, maybe briefly, the effortless awareness has no suffering. And if in the flow of risings you sense there's some clinging, holding on, being caught and stuck in something, you don't have to let go of anything, except for the clinging itself, releasing, opening the fist of the mind, letting go and letting go back into the flow of becoming. If there's any stuckness, preoccupation, it's okay. Relax back and watch. See the dance of awareness in relationship to it, how it's known and felt, recognized, to see if there can be an effortless knowing of being stuck. No self, no suffering, just simply aware, the becoming of awareness.

And if you're clinging, a gentle shift of losing interest in clinging, being more interested in whatever play of becoming is moving through, may be right there in the experience of breathing, effortless becoming, flowing on and on. To the degree that you can be with the flow of becoming, effortless becoming, can you feel a degree of freedom, non-clinging, absence of self, absence of suffering, leaving becomings alone, simple becomings in a free mind? And sometimes new becomings appear. Sometimes they appear quickly or strongly. Can something inside of you stay still and watch? Just watch without making conclusions or meaning, getting involved. As the mind does what it does, the clock is now 9:10.