

Simple Knowing

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A few words. Say a few words about the practice this morning. I'm very fond of the example from Japan. In Japanese homes and other buildings, they sometimes have a little alcove in the wall that's a little bit, you know, like an altar kind of place. It's a kind of special alcove. But sometimes all they have in the alcove is a little vase with one flower.

And there's a whole art in Japan, a flower arrangement, and they arrange one flower. And sometimes there's a scroll behind it, but it kind of has, it's there in this stillness, the silence, the space of that alcove. And that single flower stands out for what it is in the moment. It's not an explosive bouquet of multicolored flowers that are just kind of like, you know, wow, you know, just like it's all, it's the gestalt of all those flowers together that make some celebratory kind of thing, just one flower. And that flower then gets respected, it gets honored, it's considered very special. It creates a mood. It creates a kind of an ambience of you kind of want to slow down and just be with the flower in a contemplative way, as opposed to going, you know, want to dance with a bouquet or something exciting.

So in the same way, when we do mindfulness practice, there's a way to consider that rather than taking the bouquet, the gestalt of our whole life, all the thoughts and feelings, emotions, activities, sights and sounds and smells, as one big buzzing whole, we're kind of taking a period of time to allow each particular moment to be its own unique event, a simple event. And that's a little bit hard to do because some of us are glued to some of the things that are going on. We're glued to our thoughts. We're glued to our emotions and feelings. We almost identify with them. We're caught in them.

And it might be we're glued to many things at once, and we're kind of swirling in the sea of concerns and preoccupations and spinning minds. In a contemplative life, not just a Buddhist contemplative life, it's often associated with slowing down and making space for lots of space,

maybe even silence, maybe even stillness, for each thing that appears. So in mindfulness, if we're eating mindfully, you would not have a device on. You wouldn't have music on. You maybe wouldn't be having conversation with people. It would just be you and the fork going into the food and picking it up and putting it in the mouth and tasting it.

Each thing would be like that individual flower. And you would allow there to be stillness and silence and contemplative feeling around it so that each particular thing, each particular event, somehow stands out in the highlight like that flower. And so when we do walking meditation, it's something about the walking, just the walking itself is the flower, not walking down the sidewalk and looking at the for sale signs and wondering how much it might cost and what you can do and, you know, off you're running to the races kind of around. But just, you know, if you want to look at the sign, just the sign, in a contemplative environment. You wouldn't let your mind race off about buying homes. Just the walking, just the sidewalk, just now.

And now if you're doing walking in here, it might be simply the step of the foot going on the ground. Each step by itself is the event, is the flower. In meditation, each breath might be the flower, rather than having a sea of a storm of thoughts that are all swirling around. You would somehow create space, stillness, and to recognize, oh, a single thought, a single preoccupation, a single memory, just memory, a thought. And you would stop long enough to kind of have that level of recognition.

Oh, just my mind spinning out of control. Wow, that's the flower, mind out of control. Wow. And you're kind of creating a different ambience, a different atmosphere for the particular experience that you're present for. Oh, I'm scared. That's the flower. The flower of that. This is what fear is.

And you're kind of like meeting it like it's just there as a flower to be held and seen in this contemplative, spacious, silent, open kind of field where you're not glued to the fear, but you're also respecting its pristine, perfect nature. Oh, this is... Imagine, imagine if my fear was being on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art or the Smithsonian Museum. I'd want them to really make it nice and lay it out in a nice setting, in a nice atmosphere, and not tucked away in the basement of the Smithsonian. It should really have... my fear should be really on display. You know, what would it be? Just that, that, this, this.

So with those words, maybe you'll make whatever is going on for you for the next couple of hours. Maybe you'll treat it with beauty, respect, care, and maybe you'll discover there's more beauty in yourself and in this world than you've allowed for, even in your fear, for example. Thank you.