

Practice Notes: Distractions and Their Opposites

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So then, to say a few words that maybe might be support you in the practice this morning. So, there's only make two points.

The first one is, it's easy enough in meditation for a variety of reasons, including that you're kind of supposed people associated with being calm and not striving. So people can be a little bit kind of lachrymose, a little bit kind of like just not really so sharp, just kind of like being present. But it helps if you clearly understand what is taking you away from the present moment. Don't be too casual about it, like you'll get around eventually to know that, or you're kind of being present. That's good enough.

But if there's thinking, if there's emotions, if there's energy, who knows what it is? But if you see clearly, clearly know, “Oh, I'm thinking a lot. I'm thinking a lot about food. You know, I'm thinking a lot about something.” Or, “I'm really troubled. I have a sense of anxiety. I'm anxious. There's a lot of anxiety here that keeps pulling me away from just being present in a clearer way.” It might be you have—it could be all kinds of things.

So, what is it that makes it hard for you to be in the present? To simply acknowledge that clearly—no, really clearly—“Oh, this is what's happening.” That could take a lot of the momentum out of it. It might be easier to then come back and just be present.

But the second, this is the thing that's interesting to do. If you can recognize what it is that's making it hard for you to be present, consider what is the opposite of that, and see if you can provide yourself with the opposite.

So, for example, I mean, if you're really dull and sleepy, the opposite is to be alert. Can you sit up more? Can you brighten your mind? Can you bring a kind of alertness to it, rather than just putting up with it?

If you're too alert, if you're, you know, really energized and kind of activated, the opposite would be calm. Could you insert some calm into it, even maybe by being mindful in a calm way? If you are thinking a lot about, I don't know, about something you're afraid of, maybe the opposite of fear is confidence or trust. Can you find some realistic way to tap into that as you're sitting here?

What can you have confidence in right now? Where does trust live in your body? Yes, there's fear. But is that all there is, or is there some place that maybe your little toe is confident? You know, just find the opposite, or see if you can bring some opposite to kind of meet that part of it.

So, experiment if you can. Don't spend a lot of time, but two things: recognize clearly what is taking you away. That might be enough. Just, "Oh," and, like, name, "Oh, that's what's going on." The second, if you're inclined, if it's easy, see if there's the opposite, and see if the opposite can help you stay present with this whole process. So enjoy. Thank you.