

Practice Note:

Resting in Uncomfortableness

Transcribed and edited from a short talk by Gil Fronsda1 on January 12, 2011

One of the great ways to use mindfulness practice, and really almost necessary in order to be able to take the practice and go far with it, is to use the mindfulness to turn towards that which is uncomfortable. Some people have the instinct to turn away from what's uncomfortable or try to fix it. Instead turn towards what's uncomfortable, and find how to rest in the middle of it.

The word rest is a great word, because it doesn't mean fighting, fixing or judging what's uncomfortable. It also means not staying anxious about it, defended against it, upset by it, or any of the many ways in which we often react naturally about being uncomfortable, emotionally or physically. There is a great art, a great practice, training to learn how to willingly turn and move towards what's uncomfortable and find a place of rest in the middle of it, or around it or with it in some way. For me, I like the idea of finding a place to rest right in the middle of it. Then sit there, and try to find that place where it is okay to be uncomfortable. There is a kind of permission to be uncomfortable and not be in conflict with the discomfort we are feeling. From that place of rest or

non-conflict, then make space to feel, sense, see, and experience what that discomfort is in a very simple way. To try to analyze, figure out, interpret or find meaning in the discomfort is not the same thing as being at rest in it. To be at rest in it is like nothing needs to happen about it, except just to feel, to hold, and to sense it.

So perhaps none of you are feeling any discomfort this morning [laughter]. That would be wonderful. But, if in case there is something that you feel uncomfortable about during the next hour and a half, you might experiment with what it is like to turn towards and into it – not to engage or believe it more, make a story about it more, or be reactive to or act on it more. But turn towards it, see it, and see what it is like to find a place of rest or stillness in the midst of it, and just let it be. If a day of resting in the middle of it is a little bit strange and not understandable, then just let the discomfort be. See it, feel it, and let it be. That combination. So I hope that's helpful and interesting. Thank you.