

# Practice Note: The Importance of the Body

**Transcribed and edited from a short talk by Gil Fronsdal on October 13, 2010**

I'd like to say a few words about the practice this morning that might be helpful, or interesting for you to consider, and that is to emphasize the tremendous importance that our bodies have in this practice. I think our physical, embodied sense of being present through our body is often overlooked. Some people champion the body as being the temple – I like to think of it as the monastery.

So much of the practice unfolds through our body. The body is an amazing part of who we are because it responds both to our inner impulses and to the world around us. It's an amazing place to interface with the world. The body is like an antenna – it picks up much of what goes on around us. If you stay present in your body, you'll feel how you react to what goes on around you.

You can see it in the posture you take. You can see it in bodily positions you take. You can see it with the tensing up of your muscles. You can see it in all the

holding patterns in your body: how you respond to the world around you, and whether you're tight, or closed, or open to it.

You can also pick up on some of the more subtle things going on around you as well. Often the body feels it's way into what's happening, through all the different senses we have. When you're listening to a voice, you don't just listen to the content of what the person's saying. But your body, your ears, pick up the tone of the voice. The tone of the voice affects us, whether it's very fast, or very slow, or loud, or soft. There are all kinds of cues in the environment that we can pick up on through the senses of our bodies.

The body also expresses our impulses from within. When we have reactions, desires, aversions, or feelings of any kind, they are experienced through the body, and expressed through the body. If you're sensitive to what goes on in the body, you pick up cues from your inner environment as well. One of the reasons why the body's is often said to be a repository of wisdom is that the body reveals all this information about what's going on around us, what's going on within us, and the interface between the two.

In addition, the body has the advantage for our practice of always being in the present moment. The body is not going to be anywhere else but here and now. It's very

safe to be in the body. The body is like a refuge for us because it helps us stay in the present moment, and it gives us access to all this information about what's going on, so we can be wiser. Also, the degree to which you are in your body, is the degree to which you are not lost in your thoughts. So it's a very helpful antidote to the tendency to be caught up in thoughts and preoccupations. Just come back here in your body.

One of the little slogans for mindfulness practice is "Yield to your body." Relax into your body. Whatever is going on, pay attention to what's happening. Notice how it's being experienced in your body. If you have a lot of thoughts and preoccupations, feel what it's like to have those preoccupations in an embodied, physical way. What kinds of tensions, feelings, and energies are in your body?

When I was in Burma, when the monsoons came and you'd have this sudden torrential downpour, the first thing I would do is I would feel my body. What's it like? Air pressure? Humidity? How does it change with this downpour? It was very interesting to feel, and not just think about, "Oh it raining." But to feel what's shifted and changed?

Whatever happens – strong feelings, loud sounds, or all kinds of thoughts and concerns – yield to the body. Drop into the body, and feel what's going on there. Be

mindful there. It changes your whole inner environment if you feel your life through your body, rather than experiencing your life through the filter of your ideas and thoughts.

This morning you might experiment a little bit what it's like to experience things through your body.

I hope you enjoy the morning. Thank you.