

Practice Note: Patient Abiding

Transcribed and edited from a short talk by Gil Fronsdaal on February 11, 2015

One of the benefits of meditation practice is that some of the problems we have don't get solved, but they get dissolved. They dissolve – they fade away. Certainly not all of them do. But one of the things that happens when we sit down, close our eyes, and just sit upright and be – be present for what is – is that we make space for things to begin to unwind, to let go, to soften, to relax, to fade away.

Perhaps for some people, the clearest place where that is seen is with muscular tension. Just about any kind of ongoing activity in the way we live our lives will build up a little bit of tension, or a lot of tension, in our bodies. When we sit down to meditate, we might feel it in the shoulders, stomach, face, hands, whatever place it might be. Within reason, it's nice to relax a little bit if you can. But some tension is not easy to relax. You can't just soften the muscles by themselves. So, you feel this tension. Then as you just sit with it – sit upright, be aware of it, hold it in the awareness, just be present for it without trying to solve it – it begins to dissolve. It begins to relax and soften on its own.

This can also be true with some of the bigger problems in our lives. When we meditate, they can manifest in the moment with a certain mental tension, mental fixation, involvement, concern, or insistence. If we can just be present for it, clearly aware, we aren't feeding it or engaged in it. When there's a kind of stepping back and being mindful and aware of it, then some of the insistence of those thoughts and concerns, some of the preoccupation, begins to dissolve as well. The problem doesn't necessarily go away. But the way the mind relates to it begins to soften and relax.

Sometimes what happens is that when the mind relaxes enough from its insistent way of being involved with its concerns, then we get a different perspective on our concerns. And very occasionally, we realize there wasn't a problem to begin with, but the mind made it a problem. When you can see it from a different point of view, you can say: "Well, it's okay to let that be." Or, "I don't have to be worked up about that." Or, "I can let things take their course." Or, "There're other ways to deal with it so that I don't have to be tense around it" – all kinds of things.

With this patient abiding, present abiding, just abiding, and letting awareness be as strong as you can, you are really here and present in a way that is quiet and still. Don't make things into a problem. Just be with what is. And perhaps, just sitting here, many of the so-called

problems will dissolve on their own. You don't have to be the one in charge, with an agenda of what's supposed to happen.

So, you might explore this today as you sit and walk. See if there's something about patient abiding with what is that is very mindful, and that shifts or settles something at its own pace, on its own terms. The momentum begins to slow down and wear out, and you can just be – more and more still, quiet, and peaceful.