

# Practice Note: Working with Failure

**Transcribed and edited from a short talk by Gil Fronsdal on June 29, 2011**

You can just be present for things, or you can focus on particular areas that might be interesting or helpful to focus on. What I'd like to encourage you to do today is to bring some extra attention to all the ways in which you fail at doing the practice. Some of you I'm sure probably have never failed in doing the practice ever [laughter]. You sit down, close your eyes and say, "I'm going to stay on my breath." You stay on your breath to the end of the sitting and that's great.

But in their attempts to be in the present moment or focused on the breath, most people fail. Here I'm using the word "fail" in a colloquial way. The mind wanders off and it gets lost. Then you notice that and you come back.

This morning I'd like to encourage you to notice all the ways in which you don't succeed. Study that and get interested in that. If you get interested in how you don't succeed, don't think about it or analyze it. Just be really present and recognize it clearly. Then you are in the present moment in investigating that.

There is a lot to discover in your failures in practice. One is to discover your attitude about failure. It might be that there is a lot of purification and cleaning up of the internal landscape that can happen if you just notice all the unhelpful ways in which you relate to not succeeding. There might be some attitudes underlying forces in the mind that you can discover, which prompt you to fail or to get distracted. It's very interesting to see what those are and become wise about them.

It also might be possible to discover a healthy or helpful attitude about the so-called failures, so that you don't get discouraged or dismayed by them. But rather use your so-called failures as food for going further with the practice. In that way, there are no failures.

I would encourage you this morning to be interested in how you don't succeed in being mindful. My guess is if you pay careful attention to this you'll end up being more mindful. Thank you.