

Practice Note: Establishing Clarity

Transcribed and edited from a short talk by Gil Fronsdal on October 10, 2012

The word ‘clear’ is an important word. It has a number of meanings, but one I’d like to mention now is being clear about what’s happening. If you are sitting meditating, and you are thinking a lot, wandering off in thought, it’s easy to be *kind of* aware that you are thinking. You can perhaps *kind of* let go of it, *kind of* try and come back, *kind of* be with your breath. But if the mind’s really thinking, stop and be clear, “This is what I’m thinking about. I’m thinking. This is what’s happening now.”

Be clear when you sit down to meditate, “I’m here to meditate.” Be clear about establishing yourself with some clarity – some sense of clear purpose. “*This* is what I’m doing now.” Then, when you sit down, you are not still thinking about what happened earlier in the day, or what’s going to happen later in the day, or other things. You’re really clear: “This is what I’m doing.”

For walking meditation, when you start doing walking meditation, be clear, “This is what I’m doing. I’m going to be walking now.” Or if there’s a strong emotional state, or a strong concern present as you are walking,

maybe even stop in your tracks, and become really clear, “This is really a prominent thing. This is really part of what has to be acknowledged when I’m here. I’m feeling *this* way.” Really acknowledge it. If you are caught up in some concern, stop. Look it in the face, and say, “I’m really concerned about this.” Be really clear.

You can leave aside aversion or judgement. Just be completely clear that this is what’s happening. Part of mindfulness is to have this clarity. Sometimes people don’t have clarity because they are trying too hard to get into the nuances of what’s happening, as if something special is supposed to be happening.

Be clear about what’s obvious. Sit down and become clear. With that clear acknowledgement that this is what’s happening, then you’re in the present. You are clear about what’s happening. That’s all you are asked to do.

Then you can make a choice about what to do next. You can decide this is not what you want to do. You can then become clear, “When I meditate, I’m going to stay with my breathing. When I walk, I’m just going to be with my feet.” Be clear about that. Or you can become clear that what needs attention is your thinking. Or what needs attention is your feeling state. Your choice is not thinking more, but really bringing attention to staying

present.

You might experiment today with the level of clarity you have about how you acknowledge things. Experiment with not being mindful in a causal way. Some people have a checklist approach to mindfulness, where you just quickly note something and go on. Instead, actually stop, and give time to really acknowledge and be clear about what's happening now. Then see what happens in the wake of that kind of relaxed clarity, where there's no hurry to make anything happen. Just be clear, "Here, *this* is what's happening."

So, with that, I'm clear I'm supposed to go and meet with people now. Thank you.