

'Focus on Rest' as one of the '5 Ways' ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 You're talking about your background in math and science, your understanding of all the
00:00:09 comparative religion, and how your background has come and the precision of language, and
00:00:18 using everything else to create these five ways that are pulling on all this tradition.
00:00:25 Can you give me an example of these five ways, or describe this to me?
00:00:31 Certain ways.
00:00:32 Are these techniques, are these like five different techniques that you do?
00:00:37 That is correct.
00:00:38 It's five different focus techniques, each one of which represents a modern secular version
00:00:45 of something that somebody innovated in the past within a tradition.
00:00:50 Does this have to deal with what you're focusing on that you talked about earlier?
00:00:54 That's correct.
00:00:55 Is each one of these focusing on something else?
00:00:58 Essentially, yes.
00:01:00 Oh, okay.
00:01:02 Can you just give me an example of what these ...
00:01:05 Certainly.
00:01:06 What you're focusing on here?
00:01:10 One of the strong influences is from early Buddhism.
00:01:17 In early Buddhism, they had practices that involved attaining states of deep tranquility.
00:01:28 Those are sometimes referred to as absorption practices.
00:01:32 Other words are used, jhana, J-H-A-N-A, and so forth.
00:01:37 The idea there was to create a positive feedback loop.
00:01:42 You focus on a pleasant, restful experience.
00:01:46 The more you focus on it, the more pleasant it is, motivating you to focus more.
00:01:51 That creates a positive feedback loop that revs up your concentration power.
00:01:57 I've taken and I've reworked that system into a technique that I call focus on rest.
00:02:06 Most people, when they think about the word meditation, they probably don't think about

00:02:11 concentration power.

00:02:13 They probably think of something that's going to cool me out.

00:02:18 Well, that's ...

00:02:19 Stress reduction.

00:02:20 I was going to say, I'm stressed or the mind's spinning.

00:02:25 You're just saying focus on rest.

00:02:26 To me, that's like saying I'm going to go to sleep.

00:02:31 How do you keep people from going to sleep if you're focusing on something restful?

00:02:35 Just take a nap.

00:02:38 Very good point.

00:02:40 Remember I said that I've taken these innovations from the past and I put them on a uniform

00:02:46 footing within the framework of mindfulness.

00:02:49 Now, you'll remember I defined mindful awareness as a threefold attentional skill set consisting

00:02:55 of concentration power, sensory clarity, and equanimity.

00:02:59 Let's see how we can have an experience that is very blissful, tranquilizing, and would

00:03:08 be a stress reduction, cool out, mellow out, feel good kind of practice.

00:03:15 How we can have that as a builder of concentration, clarity, equanimity.

00:03:19 Here's how we do it.

00:03:20 I teach people how to detect, create, and focus on six distinct sensory flavors of rest.

00:03:31 Of course, I don't teach them all at once.

00:03:34 I teach it one at a time so you learn them gradually.

00:03:38 One is physical relaxation.

00:03:41 Another is to find a blank mental screen.

00:03:45 Another one is quiet in your head, mental quiet.

00:03:50 What if I never have quiet in my head?

00:03:52 Then just focus on one of the other ones.

00:03:54 That's why I give you six.

00:03:55 Oh, okay.

00:03:56 Sounds good.

00:03:57 There's a high probability that you'll be able to find, create, deepen, and enjoy at

00:04:02 least one of those six.

00:04:03 So it's a numbers game.

00:04:05 Sounds good.

00:04:06 Maybe you can't have quiet but you can have relaxation.

00:04:09 Maybe you can't have emotional peace but you can find the blank mental screen.

00:04:13 So I like to give people a number of options so we find, number one, what they relate to,
00:04:21 and number two, what they find pleasant and interesting and natural and works.
00:04:28 So I teach you how to find, create certain pleasant restful states.
00:04:36 When your attention wanders, you bring your attention back.
00:04:39 That's developing your concentration piece.
00:04:43 The restful states ...
00:04:44 Even if it's focusing on relaxation in the body.
00:04:47 That's the focus.
00:04:48 So if my mind goes somewhere, I just bring it back to the relaxation in my body and then
00:04:52 I'm increasing my concentration?
00:04:55 Absolutely, because you can develop your concentration with any sensory experience, any experience
00:05:00 whatsoever.
00:05:01 That seems like a good way to go.
00:05:03 Well, that was the idea behind the absorption practices, that you find these natural, pleasant
00:05:12 experiences so you're motivated to keep coming back and it creates that positive feedback.
00:05:19 So your attention wanders, you come back to the pleasant restful experience.
00:05:27 Wanders again, you come back.
00:05:29 The more you focus, the better you feel.
00:05:30 The better you feel, the more you want to focus.
00:05:34 Certainly this is going to rev up your concentration power.
00:05:38 The restful states like relaxation, peace, emotional peace, quiet, or defocusing your
00:05:50 eyes, your external gaze, you can defocus.
00:05:53 That produces a kind of God's felt, as they say in perceptual psychology.
00:05:58 That produces alpha waves automatically.
00:06:01 Anyway, the restful states tend to open you so that they create an environment where equanimity
00:06:11 is likely to happen.
00:06:12 You'll be less fighting with whatever's coming up.
00:06:18 So they induce equanimity.
00:06:22 The other thing is, I teach you not just to cool out and mellow out, but to distinguish
00:06:30 up to six distinct flavors of rest.
00:06:34 God's sensory clarity.