

3 Key Moments for Shinzen Young

00:00:00 So in your probably early experiences with meditation, can you recall any key moments

00:00:16 when you realized experientially that, whoa, this is shifting the nature of my experience

00:00:25 in a way I hadn't expected?

00:00:29 Probably the first key moment came a few months into the practice when I started to notice

00:00:37 that at the end of an hour set, the voice that had always been screaming in my head,

00:00:47 although it was still present, it was like at a distance.

00:00:52 It wasn't screaming anymore.

00:00:55 I didn't have to listen to it instantly.

00:01:00 I never experienced anything like that.

00:01:03 It was like the internal talk, by the end of a set, the internal talk hadn't gone away,

00:01:08 but it was like at a distance.

00:01:10 It was muffled.

00:01:12 That was a whole new world for me.

00:01:17 So I went to my teacher and I said, my sitting's getting interesting.

00:01:22 He said, oh, in what way? and I described this phenomenon.

00:01:25 He said, oh, that's good.

00:01:27 You're starting to go into Samadhi, into a state of high concentration.

00:01:33 So then he said, now you have anything that you experience on the cushion, you must eventually

00:01:43 be able to experience in daily life.

00:01:46 I thought, this is crazy.

00:01:48 I could barely get a little hint of that quieting of internal talk.

00:01:57 After an hour of focusing on my breath, how can I possibly maintain this in daily life?

00:02:03 He said, well, you can't.

00:02:05 Just do it.

00:02:07 That was a pivotal experience.

00:02:09 That was really new and something that who would have ever thought that was possible

00:02:15 for someone like me to experience even a few moments of quiet, of internal self-talk.

00:02:24 I would say the second dramatic thing that ever happened to me came at the

end of my

00:02:31 first week-long Zen retreat in Japan, which was this horrific killer ordeal.

00:02:41 It was in the summer, the very first night they broke three sticks over people.

00:02:50 The mosquitoes were an inch long, they could bite you through your clothes.

00:02:57 It was like, Japan is very moist, so in summer you're just sweating.

00:03:04 You're not allowed to move at all, no matter what.

00:03:07 By the way, this is a good example of what I mean by horrific ordeals that I would like

00:03:12 people not to have to go through by working smart with precise vocabulary.

00:03:22 Because if we talk about this, people say, hey, who would ever put themselves through

00:03:26 that?

00:03:27 They don't see themselves in that scenario.

00:03:30 You don't have to do this kind of thing.

00:03:33 The first time I did do that kind of thing, by the end I nearly had lost my marbles.

00:03:39 I was starting to have insane ideation, literally insane thoughts, like a torture victim, basically.

00:03:49 My whole body was shaking with pain.

00:03:54 I thought I was going to cry.

00:03:56 I was sure I was just going to start bawling.

00:04:01 It was the last sit of the last day.

00:04:06 I was just holding on.

00:04:08 My whole body was shaking.

00:04:10 I was just holding on for dear life.

00:04:14 I realized I was about to cry.

00:04:17 Not just cry, I mean bawl, like break down.

00:04:22 I started to scream in my talk space, you're not a baby, don't cry.

00:04:27 You're not a baby, don't cry.

00:04:29 Over and over again.

00:04:33 Suddenly, for no reason, I dropped into equanimity, big time.

00:04:44 It wasn't just the quiet that I described before.

00:04:49 My entire being dropped into a spontaneous equanimity.

00:04:54 The way you know that's happened is the pain level is exactly the same, but the suffering

00:05:00 level dramatically reduces, or perhaps even goes away.

00:05:07 In this particular instance, the suffering completely went away.

00:05:13 I went from near fainting level of pain to my body totally relaxed.

00:05:20 Yes, the internal talk turned off.

00:05:25 The pain turned into a kind of flowing energy that was just massaging my being.

00:05:31 It was like I could have stayed there forever.

00:05:33 The physical body was literally breaking up into a flow of spirit.

00:05:43 Then the bell rang that ended that sit.

00:05:47 I was never the same because you can hear somebody say this, but if you haven't experienced

00:05:53 it why should you believe it?

00:05:55 I would have never believed that that could be the case.

00:05:59 That was extremely dramatic.

00:06:01 A few years later, one day at the end of a day, I sat down.

00:06:06 I hadn't meditated that day.

00:06:08 I was doing self-inquiry at that time, asking who am I.

00:06:13 At the end of the day, I sat down and I said, who am I?

00:06:17 I looked at my boundaries and they vanished.

00:06:23 They never came back.

00:06:27 I was never the same, ever.

00:06:29 I didn't sit, I just got up.

00:06:32 I got up.

00:06:33 I just started to walk around and communicate with the walls.

00:06:38 They were like, me.

00:06:41 So was the whole world.

00:06:45 When I went to bed that night, I thought, well that's going to go away.

00:06:49 I woke up the next morning, it was there.

00:06:56 It never went away, ever.

00:06:58 My whole life.

00:06:59 I've been privileged to live.

00:07:01 How long ago was that?

00:07:03 That was after I'd meditated for about four years.

00:07:08 So it's been four years now, so that was like 35, 36 years ago.

00:07:15 It has nothing to do with how concentrated you are.

00:07:20 That was obviously a huge watershed.

00:07:25 That's what gives me the confidence to teach.