

What is Equanimity? ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 So, equanimity sounds like being cooled out and detached, but actually, as we would define

00:00:12 it in the mindfulness tradition, it's radical non-interference with the natural flow of

00:00:19 sensory experience.

00:00:21 So if you have emotions in the body, you don't push them down, but you don't latch onto them

00:00:27 inappropriately either.

00:00:28 It's a sort of non-pushing and pulling, a hands-off with regards to the flow of your

00:00:35 senses, which does not for a moment imply a hands-off with regards to the flow of events

00:00:41 in the world.

00:00:42 You can be very proactive and even pushy with regards to circumstances and conditions, but

00:00:52 equanimity means that you're not pushing and pulling on the natural operation of your senses.

00:00:59 Your senses defined as external sight, external sound, physical type body sensations, your

00:01:06 mental images, your internal talk, and your emotional body sensations.

00:01:10 You let touch, sight, sound, feel, image, talk, expand and contract as they wish without

00:01:16 interference.

00:01:17 Let me just make sure I get that right.

00:01:20 So equanimity is my experience, thoughts and feelings and body sensation and how I'm experiencing

00:01:29 the world in terms of sight and sound.

00:01:31 I'm just letting that happen and watching that kind of flow, I don't know, like waves

00:01:37 or something, but that's separate from my wanting to do an action in the world to change

00:01:43 things.

00:01:44 In other words, as you become passive in a sense with regards to, in the sense that you're

00:01:52 passive in the sense that you don't fight yourself.

00:01:57 Another way to look at equanimity is it's training your sensory circuits not to interfere

00:02:02 with themselves.

00:02:04 So you could compare it to if your sensory experience is the engine of a car, equanimity

00:02:11 is oiling the engine so the parts don't grind against each other.

00:02:17 Being in the Dow or that's that flow that we're going for?

00:02:22 It can lead to an experience of fluidity, but sometimes it can lead to an experience

00:02:27 of solidity because you're willing to let things melt and freeze.

00:02:32 There's another TS, this is going to be TS Eliot time, there's another TS Eliot line,

00:02:39 midwinter spring is its own season, between melting and freezing the soul's sap quivers.

00:02:48 You have to be willing to melt and freeze.

00:02:52 The equanimity is equanimity with whatever form the senses take, but what equanimity

00:02:59 does is it's a skill.

00:03:03 So another way to look at it is it's learning to love every sensory experience as it arises

00:03:12 but not to hold onto it inappropriately as it passes.

00:03:17 How do you develop that skill?

00:03:18 I'd like that one.

00:03:20 Everyone would.

00:03:21 That's a good skill.

00:03:22 Equanimity, let's all have some equanimity.

00:03:28 I concur.

00:03:30 And why it's a good skill is you'll discover that when you have equanimity with pain it

00:03:35 still hurts but it doesn't bother you.

00:03:37 And when you have equanimity with pleasure it not only feels good, it satisfies you.

00:03:45 People think they want to be free from pain and to have pleasure, but what they really

00:03:49 want is to be free from pain being a problem and to have pleasure that gives satisfaction.

00:03:56 And it turns out that the quality of equanimity does that.

00:04:00 So when you say, yeah, I'd like ...

00:04:01 Yeah, some of that, please.

00:04:02 It's like that joke, it's like I'd like to have what she's having.

00:04:03 What she's having, yeah, I agree with some of that.

00:04:04 That's what I just said.

00:04:05 Yeah, that's right.

00:04:08 Well, the equanimity is definitely something.

00:04:13 And how do you ...

00:04:14 Are people desirable?

00:04:17 Highly desirable.

00:04:18 And in fact, more than desirable may be absolutely essential.

00:04:23 If you have some physical and or emotional pain that cannot be gotten rid of by changing

00:04:30 circumstances or by analgesia or psychotropics or whatever, then you've got a choice of either

00:04:39 developing equanimity or being mired in abject suffering.

00:04:45 So definitely equanimity is not only desirable, it may be pivotal to making life worth living

00:04:52 under certain circumstances.