

Five Aspects of the Five Ways - 1 of 4 ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 When I think of each of those five ways, I sort of think of each one as having five aspects
00:00:11 to it.
00:00:12 If you think about each of the approaches, focus in where you're working with your subject
00:00:18 of experience, feel, image, talk.
00:00:20 Focus out where you're working with your object of experience, touch, sight, sound.
00:00:25 Focus on rest, where you're working with restful states, focus on change, focus on positive.
00:00:31 If you analyze each one, you can see how in specific they develop these three core mindfulness
00:00:42 skills.
00:00:48 So on one hand, they're sort of like generic exercise equipment.
00:00:52 And you can use them as you would exercise equipment.
00:00:56 If you think of a gym with five workout stations, each piece of equipment has sort of like different
00:01:05 settings.
00:01:06 You know, you can adjust the settings.
00:01:09 One way to use it is to do a set sequence, where it's like, okay, I do this, then I do
00:01:13 this, and I always follow that same set sequence.
00:01:16 So you can do all five ways, or just a subset of the five ways in a set sequence.
00:01:22 Another way people use the exercise equipment is, well, they just go to one, and they'll
00:01:28 do a certain setting, and that's what they like to do.
00:01:31 Another way that people use a room full of exercise equipment is they'll do one, and
00:01:36 then they'll decide, I'm going to go over to this other one, and they sort of cut in
00:01:39 and out.
00:01:40 It's considered rude in a public place, but if it's your own set of equipment, you can
00:01:45 sort of loop around and branch as you wish.
00:01:49 So if you wish to work within the basic mindfulness system, you can either do a set sequence,
00:01:56 or you can just have a single stand-alone practice that you do.
00:02:01 Or you can loop and branch, depending on interest, opportunity, necessity.
00:02:04 So like, start with one, and maybe there's a lot of flow, or maybe there's a lot of pain.
00:02:13 And so depending on opportunity on one hand, or necessity on another hand, it's like an
00:02:19 algorithm, and you decide.
00:02:22 So that's sort of one way to look at each of the five ways.
00:02:25 It's a generic exercise.
00:02:34 Behavioral challenges are driven by sensory challenges.
00:02:37 So sensory challenges are very primary.
00:02:41 If you're in a challenging situation, the first thing you do is you make an analysis
00:02:46 of what are the components, the sensory components, in this sensory challenge.
00:02:52 And you can also use this not just for yourself, but if you happen to be in a helping profession
00:02:57 and you're guiding some other person, you help them make an analysis of what the sensory

00:03:03 challenge is.

00:03:05 Once you see what the sensory challenge is, then you can start to formulate a range of

00:03:10 strategies for dealing with it.

00:03:12 Fortunately, there's more than one strategy, typically, and so you can try different ones

00:03:18 until you find what works.

00:03:20 For example, let's say you have an issue of pain, physical pain.

00:03:28 Like last night, I sat for several hours without moving, so at some point I started to get

00:03:35 a lot of pain.

00:03:37 Typically part of the sensory challenge is the uncomfortable touch of the pain.

00:03:45 It could happen, though, that you have disconcerting mental pictures, negative talk, fear, agitation,

00:03:55 poor me, feel flavors.

00:03:58 So the sensory challenge could be more than just pain.

00:04:01 It could involve three other factors.

00:04:03 Essentially, there are three strategies for dealing with any sensory challenge.

00:04:10 Turn towards it, turn away from it, or focus on how things change.

00:04:17 Things meaning any and all things, including it, the sensory challenge.

00:04:22 Focus on change is one of these unifying practices.

00:04:27 It's one of the practices that destroys distinctions.

00:04:31 A person might, if they choose a focus on change strategy, initially there might not

00:04:38 be any change in the sensory challenge, but there might be some flow in some other part

00:04:42 of their being.

00:04:43 They focus on that, and then it starts to move into the sensory challenge.

00:04:48 So you can turn towards, and then you bring your concentration, clarity, and equanimity

00:04:53 to the sensory challenge, and that's one way to deal with it.

00:04:58 Another way to deal with it is turn away.

00:05:00 For example, if you have uncomfortable touch and you're having a lot of feel-image-talk

00:05:05 reactions to it, you could choose to replace those negative feel-image-talk with positive.

00:05:12 You'll either be able to do it or not, but that would be to turn away from the sensory

00:05:18 challenge, focus on positive.

00:05:20 Or you could focus on restful states.

00:05:22 Or you could attempt to focus on sound, say the sound of music.

00:05:28 You're moving the attention away from the sensory challenge.

00:05:34 The problem is that people think if you focus away from the sensory challenge, then you're

00:05:40 into avoidance, denial, and suppression.

00:05:43 If you focus on the sensory challenge, you're just going to make it worse.

00:05:47 The objection to focus on change is it's not changing.

00:05:50 It'll never change.

00:05:52 So then you set yourself up for failure, right?

00:05:55 Because all possible strategies you have an objection to.

00:06:00 But let's say you were to take an extreme turn away from its strategy.

00:06:05 You're in pain, you have a lot of feel-image-talk reactions, you decide to focus on the sound

00:06:10 of music.

00:06:12 Are you really suppressing or denying?

00:06:15 If you conceive of it as I am letting the touch-feel-image-talk just dance its dance,

00:06:23 do its thing, but I'm choosing to background it, meaning totally give it permission, but

00:06:30 I'm not intentionally focusing on it.

00:06:32 I am intentionally focusing on the sound of music.

00:06:36 You're actually having equanimity with the sensory challenge.

00:06:40 You're not directing your concentration or clarity towards it.

00:06:43 But you do have equanimity with it, and that's an important factor.

00:06:48 Your concentration and clarity is directed towards sound and is being strengthened by

00:06:55 working against the gravitational tug of the touch-feel-image-talk.

00:07:00 You have to bring yourself back to the sound that's strengthening your concentration.

00:07:03 You have to learn to detect the sound even though all this other stuff is erupting like

00:07:08 a Vesuvius that revs up your detection clarity piece.

00:07:15 So you're developing mindfulness, concentration, clarity, and you're developing equanimity

00:07:21 with what's going on even though you're not focusing on it.

00:07:24 You can conceive of the endeavor that way.

00:07:27 At some point, the sensory challenge may cool out a bit, and the concentration and clarity

00:07:37 that you developed with the sound of the music, you now could, if you wish, turn that towards

00:07:44 the sensory challenge.

00:07:46 And you've got a momentum of it, and now you are doing a turn-towards strategy.

00:07:52 And yes, it's true if you focus your attention on a sensory challenge, sometimes it may exacerbate

00:08:00 it.

00:08:01 But sometimes things have to inflate before they're ready to deflate, or the bubble has

00:08:06 to get big before it's going to pop.

00:08:09 That goes with the turning-towards strategy.

00:08:12 So we did yaza last night, late-night sitting.

00:08:15 So you get sleepy.

00:08:17 So what's the sensory challenge?

00:08:18 The sensory challenge is yucky sensations of sleepiness.

00:08:24 What's the behavioral challenge?

00:08:26 The behavioral challenge is keep your spine straight, your eyes open, and your consciousness

00:08:35 awake.

00:08:37 That's the behavioral challenge.

00:08:39 Well there's a relationship between sensory challenge and behavioral challenge.

00:08:44 A turn-towards strategy is turn towards the actual sensations of sleepiness, infuse them

00:08:50 with concentration, clarity, equanimity, until they are perfused and cause you less suffering,

00:08:58 and at some point probably break up into a flowing energy.

00:09:02 That's a turn-towards strategy.

00:09:04 But you could do a turn-away-from strategy.

00:09:06 You could notice that each wave of sleepiness causes your body to slightly relax.

00:09:14 You could notice that as you get sleepy, you can't focus your eyes.

00:09:19 Your external vision defocuses, causing a restful state of just light coming in.

00:09:26 Your mental screen also may become, like, have a lot of light and so forth.

00:09:31 Those are restful states.

00:09:33 So you focus away onto the restful states that are being induced by the sleepiness,

00:09:38 and you're not dealing with the sensory challenge, but you use that to carry you through.

00:09:47 And as I say, at some point you may get an experience of flow, and then you can, that's

00:09:53 a focus-on-change strategy.