

Focus Out with Fascination ~Stephanie Nash

00:00:00 So, two times ago, I focused on flow.

00:00:22 So what I had everybody do was tune into the moving, changing nature of everything with
00:00:29 acceptance.

00:00:30 And it can be the moving, changing nature of anything visual, which could be we watch
00:00:35 leaves moving and just tuned into the movement as opposed to that's a leaf, that's a branch.

00:00:41 And there might be different frequencies of movement.

00:00:43 The branch might move like this while the leaves move like this.

00:00:46 We just tune into that movement.

00:00:48 Let the movement be a visual massage.

00:00:50 I talked about how doing this driving around LA can be wonderful.

00:00:55 There's traffic, people, right?

00:00:57 There's movement happening.

00:00:58 And you can just allow that.

00:01:00 And it doesn't keep you, you don't start driving into walls.

00:01:03 You're still present.

00:01:05 But it can create a kind of an acceptance and a massage in the visual field.

00:01:09 You can do it with sounds.

00:01:11 Sounds are just moving and coming and going and expanding and contracting.

00:01:16 You know, there can be just different movement of sounds.

00:01:20 And that's seeing and hearing out in the outside world.

00:01:23 Seeing hearing in, you can apply that movement of sound and they come and go to the talk
00:01:29 in your head.

00:01:30 Oh, it's a sound coming and going and getting louder and softer.

00:01:34 It's just movement.

00:01:35 You can do it closing your eyes with images.

00:01:37 When we see, we tend to, I have a blank place where we rest visually.

00:01:42 You just close your eyes and it might be just patches of lightness and darkness.

00:01:45 And for a lot of people, it's like a lava lamp.

00:01:48 It's got a glob here and it comes and goes.

00:01:51 You can just watch that movement of it and let that be a visual massage.

00:01:54 Or if images come in, for most people it's not like, hi, there's a square picture frame.

00:01:59 It's usually a vague, hazy, subtle thing or maybe part of an image comes and goes out
00:02:04 or something reminds you of something.

00:02:06 And just let that movement of images coming in and out be a visual massage.

00:02:11 And in the body, you can work with sensations moving around.

00:02:15 Breath is an ultimate movement to come in and go out.

00:02:19 There's how many different kinds of breath meditation I personally have taught, I don't

00:02:23 know, 10, 12 different ways of looking at the breath.

00:02:25 But one way I did was just noticing the movement, the expanding, the contracting, maybe the

00:02:30 movement of air coming through the nose, maybe emotions coming in and out.

00:02:35 A sound happens and ooh, you know, birds happen and I feel a little movement of delight in

00:02:40 my body or a dog barks and I feel, oh, maybe a little tension and release there or something.

00:02:46 So that we just turn into the movement nature and everybody thought, oh, that's cool, that's

00:02:51 fun.

00:02:52 And it makes us softer and I feel like I've really meditated, you know.

00:02:56 Then the next week I went, okay, now we're going to look at stillness.

00:02:59 We're going to look at space and rest.

00:03:02 I tuned everyone into the same visual thing when you close your eyes.

00:03:09 Kind of focusing on movement, even though movement's there, you're not watching movement.

00:03:13 It's a place to park.

00:03:16 We even worked with just a sense of space around you, a space around things to allow

00:03:22 things to happen inside a bigger space.

00:03:25 The real thing that was an eye opener for a lot of people was auditory, listening to

00:03:30 silence even though sound is present.

00:03:33 So we open out to the world of sound and there might be sound there, sound there, but what

00:03:38 if we listen in a direction there is no sound?

00:03:40 Ah, tuning into that space and then maybe even listening to the silence beyond sound.

00:03:47 Ah, huge space, very expansive focus and everybody felt like, oh, we've really meditated now.

00:03:53 You know, that's different.

00:03:54 That's different than how we get through life.

00:03:56 So we had one week of flow and then one week of rest and space.

00:04:01 So today I thought, let's celebrate solidity.

00:04:07 And this is also, if you've got emails, I ended up putting it as the theme.

00:04:12 You've heard of the power of now, right?

00:04:14 Let's be present.

00:04:15 Well, there's a way to tune in to see and you'll notice everything I do is visual, auditory,

00:04:22 somatic.

00:04:23 We have five senses plus our thought process.

00:04:27 Our five senses plus our thought process are what tell us who we are, when, where, why,

00:04:33 how we feel about it, what we want to do, what happened and whether that was good or

00:04:36 bad and what all our judgments are and all our suffering comes in in these five senses

00:04:45 plus our thought process.

00:04:47 And you could say thoughts and feelings, but the feelings will be in the body.

00:04:53 And you can divide all of that into three because I like three.

00:04:57 Trinity is also one of the things about three.

00:05:00 My meditation teacher, Shinzen Young, came up with this though.

00:05:03 It's his brilliance and his ingredients I cook with and send always appreciation and

00:05:09 gratitude to teachers, always, always, always.

00:05:12 I come from teachers and thank you.

00:05:17 But he divides it all into visual, auditory, somatic.

00:05:20 So your entire sensory experience, your thoughts, visual, I see images, I hear internal talk.

00:05:27 So there's visual, auditory to thoughts.

00:05:30 Things are in the body and there might be a thought component, but that's visual.

00:05:33 So see, hear, feel.

00:05:35 We either see out the world, we see into our mind.

00:05:38 We hear out the sounds, we hear in to the talk.

00:05:42 Feel out and feel in.

00:05:44 Feel in will be emotions.

00:05:46 Then we're doing subjective versus objective.

00:05:49 Subjective would be emotional sensations.

00:05:51 I have fear in my chest.

00:05:54 You know when you want to cry sometimes and you try to choke it down, the tongue kind

00:05:57 of gets engaged here and we've even got terms like cat got my tongue and I got a lump in

00:06:01 my throat.

00:06:02 I was all choked up.

00:06:03 You know, and it gets, or teary feeling behind the eyes or a wave of love, of warmth we might

00:06:09 feel in the chest.

00:06:10 Or you get embarrassed, there might be a flush you feel up in your face.

00:06:14 Usually it's the front part of the torso, maybe into the face, but some people get anger

00:06:18 down the back of their neck, right?

00:06:19 The hair stood up on the back of my neck.

00:06:21 We've got that phrase.

00:06:22 It broke my heart, right?

00:06:24 We have all sorts of ways in which emotions play in the body and we don't, we might say

00:06:30 my heart or I couldn't stomach that or you know, we'll point to parts of the body, but

00:06:35 it's usually kind of, it, they're vague.

00:06:39 It's kind of another dimension of feeling in the body.

00:06:41 We can't say that was this organ.

00:06:44 It kind of spreads and takes a certain area of the body and it's a kind of sensation just

00:06:50 like earlier today in the meditation.

00:06:53 I had you tune into a particular flavor sensation.

00:06:57 The flavor or flavors of letting go release.

00:07:00 There are other sensations.

00:07:02 You could still feel your butt on the cushion, but we were tuning into letting go.

00:07:06 While in the same way, feel in are certain sensations that are emotional in nature.

00:07:12 And if you're not sure, say they're not.

00:07:15 But if you think they are, if you think, ah, every time I go, damn it, why did he do that?

00:07:22 And I feel this clench in here.

00:07:23 We'll call that emotional in nature.

00:07:25 Okay.

00:07:26 And so you start to get to know where anger happens in your body, where fear, anger, fear,

00:07:32 sadness, shame.

00:07:33 Those are the big four.

00:07:36 People suffer and kill themselves over those all the time.

00:07:39 So and then we have good ones, love, joy, peace, gratitude, and they tend to be subtler.

00:07:44 The louder ones tend to, hey, I'm here, but just like restful that we tuned into, that's

00:07:50 a subtle thing that's available at any given moment.

00:07:53 But no, I'm not tuning into that.

00:07:55 I'm tuning into that guy cut me off, you know, or the talk, right?

00:08:01 So you can, as a choice, learn to tune into these subtle.

00:08:04 It's like tuning in a fainter radio station, but after a while, it's not so subtle.

00:08:09 The more you tune into it, the bigger it gets.

00:08:12 You know that way.

00:08:13 You literally develop new neural pathways in the brain.

00:08:17 I grew up in the woods, so I talk about taking a path in the woods, and I didn't like taking

00:08:22 the regular trail.

00:08:23 I'd always like to take a different trail.

00:08:25 That to me was fun.

00:08:26 I used to try to get lost.

00:08:27 I thought that was so exciting.

00:08:28 That moment when I'm like, I don't know where I am, because I grew up in a small town where

00:08:32 everyone knew you since you were born and just anything unknown was thrilling.

00:08:36 And I do a new path, and then pretty soon I take that new path every day, and that's

00:08:40 my path, and all the animals would take that path, and then pretty soon the old one grows

00:08:44 over, right?

00:08:46 And then pretty soon that's the main path.

00:08:47 Well, now I've got to try another one.

00:08:49 But I've talked with neurologists and brain researchers, and at Harvard, even the guys

00:08:58 who studied my brain when I was there, and they say what I describe as those paths in

00:09:04 the woods, I'm telling people that's a way to create new paths, and they have told me

00:09:08 that is exactly what happens in your brain.

00:09:11 That every time you have that thought, and this happens, oh, the brain goes, there's

00:09:16 a pathway.

00:09:17 So the next time that thought happens, there's a higher probability you're going to have

00:09:21 that same response because it knows that path.

00:09:24 Not because that was the best one, not because that's the one that feels good.

00:09:29 And then we have a tendency to associate familiar with what we like, and those are two different

00:09:36 things.

00:09:37 And I learned that real big at Duke when we worked with battered housewives who would

00:09:41 rather get hit than go to something they didn't know.

00:09:43 And they even sometimes let their children get hit rather than go to something they didn't

00:09:48 know because there was a life or death fear of leaving that isn't rational.

00:09:55 It has to do with us associating familiar with good.

00:10:01 So in that way today, I'm going to be having you, now you're going, oh, this is going to
00:10:08 be scary.
00:10:09 So today I'm going to have you tune into something you do all the time.
00:10:12 See here, feel out.
00:10:13 Sight, you see all the time.
00:10:14 Hear, you hear sounds all the time.
00:10:15 Feel in the body, oh, I didn't do feel out in the body.
00:10:21 Feel in where emotions, feel out is every other sensation.
00:10:25 Every objective sensation that is not emotional.
00:10:28 But on the cushion is feel out.
00:10:30 Feel your tongue in your mouth, that's feel out.
00:10:33 It's objective.
00:10:34 There's no drama.
00:10:38 There's no emotion in it.
00:10:39 The breath is one of the reasons we use breath in meditation.
00:10:46 For some people, 30% of people, when you say focus on your breath, they attempt to control
00:10:50 it.
00:10:51 They can't not.
00:10:52 And so it's an unpleasant experience for them.
00:10:54 But people who teach breath meditation don't always factor that.
00:10:58 That can be an issue.
00:10:59 But you feel your hands.
00:11:01 You can feel your feet on the floor, clothes on your skin, temperature, humidity of air
00:11:06 on your skin.
00:11:07 There's lots of touch sensations that are not emotional in nature that would be feel
00:11:12 out.
00:11:13 So today, to be here now, our dramas tend to be where?
00:11:19 See and hear and feel in, right?
00:11:21 Thoughts and feelings.
00:11:22 Ah, I remember that.
00:11:25 This happened and I play it over and over again.
00:11:28 We replay our traumas.
00:11:29 We traumatize ourselves over and over again, right?
00:11:34 Where's a safe place to go?
00:11:35 Well, we can go to our happy flow place.
00:11:37 We did that.
00:11:38 We can go to our happy rest place.
00:11:39 Everybody wants to go to a happy place.
00:11:42 We can actually ground ourselves in the truth and the reality of allowing all of our attention
00:11:50 to soak into, penetrate, explore what we're seeing.
00:11:59 Now see, hear, feel.
00:12:02 We do it all the time.

00:12:03 But what we tend to do is see and hear in general.

00:12:09 We tend to let it all be one thing.

00:12:13 We don't tend to separate out see from hear from feel.

00:12:18 It's just all this stuff happening.

00:12:20 And we tend to be drawn to an arising, pleasant or unpleasant, a loud sound.

00:12:27 And that the only time we separate hear from see would be like music, art, and seeing the

00:12:37 art.

00:12:38 We'll let the art feel it.

00:12:39 But then we'll have an emotional sensation to the art or something else.

00:12:42 But we're not separating necessarily, deliberately separating the see out from it.

00:12:48 In fact, the internal talk may be going wild while we're seeing the art.

00:12:52 What does he mean?

00:12:54 But to just focus in on the see, just focus in on the hear, just focus in on the feel.

00:13:03 Now when you do this, especially with see out, hear out, feel out, it doesn't mean that

00:13:11 if I'm just focusing on the see, I have stopped feeling and I have no ability to hear or sounds

00:13:17 have all stopped.

00:13:18 It doesn't mean that at all.

00:13:20 It means I am selectively attending.

00:13:24 I have so much real estate in my consciousness and I am filling it, choosing meditation,

00:13:30 I'm choosing to fill my awareness with the rest of my body.

00:13:35 I'm choosing to fill my awareness with the visual experience.

00:13:40 So it's a choice to do it and at first it may seem effortful.

00:13:51 Well normally I just see and hear and feel.

00:13:54 You're making me just go there and just go there and just go there.

00:14:00 Or you might say, I have trouble concentrating.

00:14:03 I want to develop my concentration.

00:14:06 Well my answer to that, this is my yellow brick road, is fascination.

00:14:12 I guided, I think the week before last week, I think I did a 45 minute meditation on flow.

00:14:19 I think I was.

00:14:20 And last week was probably 35.

00:14:21 But I did a 45 minute meditation.

00:14:22 And everyone went, I didn't think that was 45 minutes.

00:14:23 I was like, 20 minutes.

00:14:24 And I said, okay, because that means you were in a state of high concentration.

00:14:33 What's that mean?

00:14:34 It means you were there and you weren't wandering off somewhere.

00:14:38 You were there.

00:14:41 Why were you there?

00:14:43 Well I happen to think it's fascinating.

00:14:46 So I share that fascination.

00:14:48 It's like the fascination and I always say like a four year old with a ladybug.

00:14:53 You know, we're four that can't, in fact you cannot take a three or four year old and walk

00:14:57 across, if this room were grass and a grass yard, you couldn't go from there to here in
00:15:03 five minutes with a three or four year old because there'd just be too many interesting
00:15:07 things to see.
00:15:08 Whoa, look at that.
00:15:09 That is so cool.
00:15:10 Look at that ladybug.
00:15:11 It just opened its wings.
00:15:12 Oh my goodness.
00:15:13 And I work with people in chronic and acute pain.
00:15:14 You can look at your pain that way.
00:15:15 You can look at your emotions.
00:15:16 Oh my God, I have terror here.
00:15:17 Okay, where do you feel it?
00:15:18 Where are the boundaries?
00:15:19 Is there movement?
00:15:20 Is it the same in the middle or in the outside?
00:15:21 No one's ever asked anybody these questions.
00:15:22 I don't know.
00:15:23 Well, maybe.
00:15:24 Actually, I think it's a good question.
00:15:25 I think it's a good question.
00:15:26 I think it's a good question.
00:15:27 I think it's a good question.
00:15:28 I think it's a good question.
00:15:29 I think it's a good question.
00:15:36 When you start exploring it, it is friggin' fascinating.
00:15:40 And guess what?
00:15:41 The suffering's gone.
00:15:43 You're watching the pain.
00:15:46 Usually as soon as we start watching it and stuff, often it turns into an energy.
00:15:50 It often presents its flow nature.
00:15:52 And pretty soon the suffering's gone.
00:15:54 But fascination, this childlike fascination to explore with curiosity, with kind of an
00:16:02 openness, that to me isn't where we're going.
00:16:07 That's the yellow brick road to getting there.
00:16:10 And so people who say, I can't concentrate, that fascination creates concentration.
00:16:16 Because everybody who did that 45 minutes wasn't able to sit at home for 45 minutes
00:16:20 without their attention wandering.
00:16:22 They were fascinated.
00:16:23 They were interested.
00:16:25 It rivets your attention.
00:16:26 When you're doing something you really like, you go at it and hours go by and you're not

00:16:31 aware of it, right?

00:16:33 You like it.

00:16:34 So I say, get fascinated.

00:16:36 You can practice getting fascinated.

00:16:40 That 45 minute meditation, some people went, oh my goodness, I had no idea there was this

00:16:46 and they went there and then this.

00:16:49 Or last week with the rest, the whole notion of tuning into silence, even though sound

00:16:54 was there, was like wow to people.

00:16:56 And then we went there and then, so we filled one 45 minute meditation with all these things

00:17:02 to explore and another just with flow.

00:17:06 And then another 35 minute meditation filled with just places to rest and park and space.

00:17:13 Every single moment of all those meditations is available in every moment.

00:17:21 Every friggin' moment of your sensory experience is friggin' fascinating.

00:17:26 There's so much to soak into.

00:17:29 You just got to shift to that four year old and what I'm trying to supply is saying, it's

00:17:36 like saying, have you ever wiggled your ear or a little tone?

00:17:38 No one ever tried it.

00:17:40 No one ever said, have you ever done that?

00:17:43 It wasn't until my meditation teacher said, well what if you just look at that?

00:17:48 What if you separate this experience?

00:17:49 It didn't occur to me to separate it.

00:17:51 I thought my emotions were part of the experience and I thought what I thought was the truth.

00:17:57 I thought that voice in the head was me.

00:18:00 I thought that was my narration of my life.

00:18:04 The idea that the voice in my head wasn't me, I was just like, whoa.

00:18:09 It's not who's driving the car, it's what's on the radio and I can turn it down or turn

00:18:16 it off or change the channel or if the knob is stuck I can just treat it as background

00:18:21 sound like the water or traffic or birds.

00:18:26 Never occurred to me.

00:18:27 So I was lucky to get a teacher to say, hey look, here's some other ways you can tune

00:18:34 into that.

00:18:35 That kind of makes life better, doesn't it?

00:18:38 All this richness.

00:18:40 And the question I get, and this was just on the YouTube video I put up, I had to re-watch

00:18:45 myself.

00:18:46 But some people go, doesn't that take away the beauty?

00:18:52 You know, you're looking at these ingredients and you're missing that whole beauty of it.

00:19:01 Doesn't that kind of take it away?

00:19:04 You're getting kind of technical here.

00:19:07 No.

00:19:09 If all those ingredients are available in every given moment, do you see the richness

00:19:16 and depth that's there?

00:19:19 You start to realize that what we've been looking at is a cartoon versus what's real.

00:19:26 What's really there is so much more interesting and fulfilling than what we've been accepting

00:19:32 as.

00:19:33 Of course that's what I think and that's what's there.

00:19:37 What's there is what should be there.

00:19:40 Or what could be there.

00:19:41 Or what I'm afraid is there.

00:19:44 So I know one teacher always says, you know your thoughts aren't real, right?

00:19:50 And I just kind of like that.

00:19:53 Because we go, what are you trying to say?

00:19:58 But today we're going to work with, so if you're tangled up in thoughts and feelings,

00:20:04 we have a lot of ways to go.

00:20:06 You can watch them flow.

00:20:08 You can find a place to rest.

00:20:10 Or, and this is kind of what some Zen practice is, you can tune in to the grounded reality

00:20:18 of the present moment of see, hear, feel.

00:20:22 And this, I have a lot of clients who are psychologists and psychiatrists in the psychology

00:20:29 field.

00:20:30 There's lots of isms and ists in there.

00:20:33 And we've communicated back and forth a lot about using mindfulness practice and stuff

00:20:42 with patients.

00:20:43 And I've mentioned this in here before, but there was, the person was trying to get a

00:20:50 woman to tune into her body in a restful way.

00:20:53 And this woman had been sexually traumatized and abused.

00:20:58 And so just going in the body at all was just danger, danger.

00:21:02 Will Robinson can't go in the body.

00:21:05 She just doesn't have, she just hasn't developed the skill yet to work with, there was so much

00:21:11 there.

00:21:12 So we said, what if we went out to sound?

00:21:17 So she went out and worked with sound and insight, didn't even do the body at all, and

00:21:22 developed this equanimity with it.

00:21:24 And then developed the mindfulness skills there that then when we could come back to

00:21:28 the body, she'd already had those muscles, those mindfulness muscles developed of clarity

00:21:33 and equanimity and focus.

00:21:36 So that when she came to the body, she didn't get, you know, if stuff came up, she had skills

00:21:42 for saying, ah, this is this, this is this.

00:21:46 And I can, I can see and work with this skillfully to then rewire the brain so that we're not

00:21:52 re-traumatizing every time.

00:21:54 Does that make sense?

00:21:56 And sound is here now.

00:21:58 So what we hear at this moment is happening in this moment, and we don't really have a

00:22:02 drama about it.

00:22:03 It's not related to our personal issues.

00:22:06 So if at any moment you're going, oh my God, this is going on, or I can't keep doing this.

00:22:13 Okay, that's coming in as internal talk.

00:22:15 That's hearing in.

00:22:18 Wherever your distraction is, you can use your distraction to take you more deeply into

00:22:23 your meditation.

00:22:26 How?

00:22:30 So if I'm hearing in, I can slide out on the auditory axis.

00:22:35 Hear in, slide.

00:22:36 Every time I go, my God, you know, that person is rude.

00:22:43 Okay, hear out into sound.

00:22:47 You can think of it as some people went, oh, it's like an antidote.

00:22:49 And I go, yeah, but it's really, you're already hearing.

00:22:53 You're just sliding out and anchoring in the truth of this sound rather than the one you're

00:23:00 making up in your head.

00:23:03 And so when we hear sounds, sometimes we get images.

00:23:08 And there's a visual component to our thinking process that we're usually less aware of because

00:23:12 we walk around with our eyes open.

00:23:15 But we all get image with our eyes open.

00:23:17 And if you haven't done this with me before, I will demonstrate it.

00:23:21 So everyone look up here to the front of the room and see this lovely scarf and really

00:23:26 see all of, see she needs to iron that, see the texture of the wood and the light, and

00:23:31 really, really see it.

00:23:32 Now look up in this direction and visualize your car, the inside of your car.

00:23:37 Okay, can you see the inside of your car?

00:23:41 Okay, see how your focus kind of went back to see the car and this is softer?

00:23:44 Now come forward and really see the texture here.

00:23:49 See that difference?

00:23:50 We do that thousands of times a day.

00:23:53 We're not aware of it.

00:23:55 We're going back and seeing it.

00:23:56 Every time you get a thought, oh, I'm going to go to the grocery store, you're going to

00:23:58 see a grocery store.

00:24:00 He said that you're going to see his face.

00:24:02 You're going to go back and forth like that all day long.

00:24:05 So today we're going to be working with that, see this.

00:24:08 If you find yourself going back, because we're going to have eyes open at one point, if you

00:24:12 find yourself going into things, ground in this and really go up.

00:24:18 Look for texture.

00:24:19 That's the fascination.

00:24:21 Look for texture.

00:24:22 Every time you look, try to see something different you didn't see before.

00:24:27 Like the kid with the ladybug or walking across the grass.

00:24:30 That make sense?

00:24:31 Cool.

00:24:32 That's what we're going to do.