

Five Basic Assumptions in Mindfulness Practice ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 There are certain axioms or basic assumptions behind mindfulness.

00:00:10 These lead to not logical conclusions, but when implemented they lead to experiential

00:00:21 developments within a person.

00:00:24 I say that there are certain assumptions that underlie mindfulness as I would teach it.

00:00:31 I think that they're very reasonable assumptions, that they could be accepted by anyone, but

00:00:41 they are assumptions.

00:00:42 The first assumption is that the ability to focus on what one deems relevant whenever

00:00:52 one wants, to have that ability is better than to not have that ability.

00:00:58 That's an assumption, although some of the work in positive psychology would seem to

00:01:04 prove that assumption.

00:01:06 But anyway, we can take that as a basic axiom.

00:01:10 In other words, it's better to have the ability to concentrate on what you want than to lack

00:01:16 that ability.

00:01:17 Notice, by the way, I said the ability to focus on what you deem relevant at any given

00:01:23 time.

00:01:24 I didn't say that you're necessarily constrained to go around as a concentration machine in

00:01:31 an always highly focused state, but that you have the ability whenever you want to focus

00:01:37 on what is deemed relevant in that circumstance.

00:01:40 That's the axiom of concentration.

00:01:43 Then there's an axiom that it's better to be sensorially clear about what's going on

00:01:51 than to be sensorially muddled.

00:01:55 That's another assumption in mindfulness.

00:02:00 Third axiom is that it's good to be able to not fight with yourself, at least have that

00:02:10 ability.

00:02:12 Sometimes you might have to fight with yourself under certain circumstances, but most people

00:02:18 always are fighting with themselves in subtle ways, very, very microscopic subtle ways without

00:02:23 even realizing it.

00:02:25 It's good to have the ability not to fight with yourself.

00:02:29 That's the axiom of equanimity.

00:02:32 Then there's a fourth axiom that I call recycle the reaction, which is as the result of applying

00:02:41 the axioms of concentration, clarity, and equanimity, your sensory experience may change.

00:02:48 It may change temporarily in unpleasant ways, or it may change in pleasant ways.

00:02:55 It is even possible that strange experiences might arise.

00:03:02 They do for some people, not for everyone.

00:03:05 As the result of merely applying what would seem to be fairly innocuous axioms of concentration,

00:03:12 clarity, and equanimity.

00:03:14 The fourth axiom is really important because it tells you what to do if the first three
00:03:20 axioms produce anything that's challenging, either in the sense that it's pleasant and
00:03:26 therefore you might get addicted, or in the sense that it's unpleasant and therefore you
00:03:31 might suffer, or in the sense that it's weird and therefore you might freak out.
00:03:38 As the result of applying the first three axioms, reactions might take place, not inevitably,
00:03:44 not saying they will take place for everyone.
00:03:46 Not everyone gets heavenly or hellish or bizarre phenomena, but just in case they do, remember
00:03:55 the fourth axiom, recycle the reaction.
00:04:00 Then there's one final axiom, the fifth axiom, which is if you forget the first four axioms,
00:04:09 the fifth axiom says have contact information of a competent guide and call them, and they'll
00:04:18 remind you of the first four axioms.
00:04:23 Those are the five axioms.
00:04:24 Hey, Euclid had five too, by the way, five postulates, so I'm in good company.