

Strengthening a Weak Ego Structure Through Mindfulness ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 How can we prevent the weakening of our ego?

00:00:05 Sometimes people are afraid that if they have a weak ego structure,

00:00:13 they shouldn't be practicing meditation because meditation will further weaken that ego structure.

00:00:21 However, and this is ego structure in the sense of ego strength, which is a good thing.

00:00:27 However, I would say that it depends on the kind of meditation practice that you do and on the orientation.

00:00:36 Because I've had people that have come to me who have official psychiatric diagnosis of borderline personality,

00:00:47 weak ego structure, in the sense of another person.

00:00:51 They lost all sense of themselves, but not in the good sense, not in the healthy merging sense,

00:00:58 but in an unhealthy sense that was dysfunctional, uncomfortable, and caused suffering and disorientation.

00:01:08 What I do for people that are in that situation is just a slight modification of the standard meditation that I give to dissolve the self.

00:01:19 Except with this slight modification, it's an exercise in strengthening or in improving ego strength in the psychological sense of ego strength.

00:01:32 The problem is when they're confronted with the other, the sights and sounds particularly, or the physical touch from another human being,

00:01:41 they lose contact with themselves, as I said, in a not good way.

00:01:48 So what I taught them how to do is when the other looms, that they keep noting feel, image, talk,

00:01:57 to keep a strong contact with those subjective elements.

00:02:02 The problem was that they were losing consciousness of the strands that produce the self.

00:02:09 So with a technique superficially that looks similar to the first step of the deconstruction of self,

00:02:19 I gave them the ability to keep contact with the feel, image, talk, even when strong other arose.

00:02:31 And just that attentional exercise vastly strengthened their ability to maintain boundaries and to remember who they were in a psychologically healthy way.

00:02:48 So I think that there's a lot of subtlety involved in this issue of psychologically healthy self, spiritually healthy self, and so forth.

00:03:01 And I've found that the sensory categories that I like to use and the focus methods that I like to use

00:03:08 can actually be used either to deconstruct ego in the sense of ego as a problem,

00:03:21 but they can also be used to strengthen ego in the sense that ego is a desirable thing in its psychological context.