

Standard (Relative Rest) and Advanced Focus On Rest (Do Nothing) ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 One of my pet phrases is, when you say, nothing is happening as I'm sitting there, either
00:00:10 literally nothing is happening, in which case you are in cessation. You're in nirvana itself.
00:00:21 And that's great. Or, that's not the case. In which case six things are happening in
00:00:28 your body. Your body is physically relaxed, your eyes are defocused, your ears are defocused,
00:00:33 your body is emotionally neutral, your mental screen is blank, and your head is quiet. That's
00:00:39 six sensory events are going on. If you pay attention to those as tangible events, then
00:00:46 something is happening when nothing much is happening. And that brings a clarity component
00:00:52 into the experience of nothing much is happening. And guess what? That will now tend to bring
00:00:58 a growth component back into the big picture of your practice. The absorption jhana shamatha
00:01:06 practice, as it's described, represents a thinning out of self and world. What is thin
00:01:13 is penetratable. You go into these absorption states and then you penetrate the restful
00:01:24 factors, or the jhanic factors, for me it's restful factors. The awareness soaks into
00:01:29 them and what do they become? Flow and go. They break up into vibrating points. So there's
00:01:36 what's called sukha vipassana, which is dry vipassana, where if we put it into my language,
00:01:45 you go directly from touch, sight, sound, or feel, image, talk, you do a direct penetration
00:01:53 and it dissolves into vibrating void. That's called dry vipassana. Or there's the absorption
00:02:00 path, where you get things all thinned out, in once again my personal language, instead
00:02:08 of touch, sight, sound, it's relaxation, light, silence. Instead of feel, image, talk, it's
00:02:13 peace, blank, quiet. Then you penetrate those into flow and go, because they're more easily
00:02:19 penetrated, because they're more thinned out. But either way, gets you to the same results.
00:02:25 So focus on change, once again, enters in when you do the vipassana, what are called
00:02:32 the vipassana jhanas, where you're penetrating the jhanic factors. So that's why I have to
00:02:38 focus on change. Focus on rest, as I like to teach it to people. There are two sort
00:02:45 of ways of doing it. The standard way that I just described, working with restful flavors.
00:02:56 And then there's the advanced version of focus on rest, which I call do nothing. But I have
00:03:02 a very clear definition of what it means to do nothing. Do nothing isn't twiddle your
00:03:08 thumbs and let your mind wander. There's a certain way to do nothing that allows you
00:03:14 to do that, to have that be a growth experience. And the do nothing is my reworking, once again,
00:03:24 a reworking. I don't claim these are the same thing. It's modified, reworked. But it's my
00:03:30 reworking of the whole bundle of approaches that we find worldwide that might be described
00:03:37 as anti-meditation. In the sense that instead of making an effort, instead of engaging in
00:03:50 the noble quest, you, in the words of one of the teachers in that tradition, Papaji,
00:03:57 you call off the search. I love that phrase, call off the search. You stop trying to meditate.
00:04:08 And you stop trying to do anything and you just abide without trying. You come to abide
00:04:18 in the nature of consciousness. In the Tibetan tradition, this is Dzogchen and Mahamudra.
00:04:29 In terms of Zen, some of the early Zen tranquil illumination schools of Zen where they wouldn't,

00:04:37 they just like, it was a non-doing, some interpretations of just sitting, some interpretations of choiceless
00:04:43 awareness, some interpretations of non-dual awareness sort of work this way. As I mentioned,
00:04:51 there's two sides to the path and it's paradoxical. There's a place for bearing down, there's
00:04:58 a place for easing up, there's a place for doing something and there's a place for not
00:05:06 doing anything at all. So the not doing anything at all I call deny. If I had to say what's
00:05:17 my model in it, it's Dzogchen as I understand it, which admittedly I'm certainly not a scholar
00:05:25 or a deep practitioner of that tradition, but I have some sense of what it's about and
00:05:31 I use my own categories and sort of made something that is based on their themes. They talk about
00:05:41 the spacious nature of consciousness, but they also talk about the effortless, spontaneous,
00:05:49 dynamic nature of consciousness. I take that effortless, dynamic nature of consciousness
00:05:57 to be the flow aspect. Even within the sort of do-nothing approach, you're certainly not
00:06:13 meditating on change, you're not doing focus on change, but the fact is as you come to
00:06:21 abide in the spacious nature of consciousness, the dynamism of that spacious nature presents
00:06:29 itself to you as effortless expansion and contraction. So even the do-nothing is not
00:06:38 totally unrelated to the themes of focus on change.