

...and an Out Take (Shinzen Young, meditation teacher)

My name is Stephanie Nash and I am sitting here interviewing Shinzen Young, who is an intubated guru.

# 1. WORKING with INTENSE EMOTION ~ Shinzen Young guided

## Stephanie Nash

Okay, so you mentioned you wanted to work on some specific issues. Anything you'd like to just tell me briefly about those issues before we start to work in terms of what it is and what your goals would be in working on it? Yeah, what I'm working with now is a strong feel component that has, you might call it touch, I sometimes call it secondary feel, but that tension that comes around the feel can lock into quite a dramatic degree. When it first arose, it seemed triggered by external event, but what I, it's a response, an emotional response to an event, but I think it became clear that as I processed it, that it kind of worked as a magnet to draw years to who knows what other stuff up with it that matched that emotional frequency. And then for a while now, several days, I've been working with it.

I let go of there having to be any talk image component. And it's just a huge amount of feel which I have techniques and ability to process, but it's quite a significant event and I thought, ah, time to call in the big guns. And I thought you could help me with this and maybe someone could benefit from that help.

Let me ask some questions so I can make sure I understand the situation. You're having a lot of emotional type body sensation, what I call feel, but I think that you're saying that you have a muscle tension reaction to that feel when it arises. I think there's a very, very strong feel and because it is so nonstop and intense that the body just starts to tighten around it in a way that I'm working not only with the feel, but I have to kind of work with the tightening that comes around it. And so I might work with one, then work with the other, but there's no question the core is feel and everything else is just because it's been so intense for so long, the body's just starting to, and I'm literally now experiencing physiological things in the body just simply from that tightening around the feel.

Does that make sense? Yes. So I have to work with this sensory phenomenon, the underlying emotional sensations or feel as we would put it in the technical vocabulary, body sensation that seems emotional. And then there's a kind of physical response in the form of muscle tension. And that muscle tension, some people consider that to be a purely physical sensation, but because it's so linked with the emotions, some people consider it to be in and of itself an emotional sensation.

We can parse it either way depending on what's natural for that person. I have a few other questions to ask you. It sounds to me like you've already been working with it in the way that I would consider optimal. By that I mean that you're sometimes focusing on the tension reaction, sometimes focusing on the underlying feel itself, which is the general strategy of divine and conquer. I've been using a lot of, flow is probably where my natural strength is. And I can work with flow and almost immediately have some kind of response to that of going into it. But then it re-arises and re-congeals so I thought, okay, I've got to maybe work more deeply or maybe you can just help me. Well, probably the strategies that you are using are already optimal.

That's my guess. It's simply a matter of continuing with them. But let's just do some interactive stuff and we'll see what comes up. I'm not sure that there's actually anything new to add content wise. It may just be a numbers game of continuing what you're now doing. But like I said, let's see what happens.

I do have a couple more questions. Does the tension reaction that you're referring to, does that tend to come up in a pronounced pattern in real time or is it more of an ongoing sort of situation? By that I mean, is there a clear sense of there'll be an eruption of feel and then

there's a tension, eruption of feel, then there's tension. Or is it that the tension is sort of there in a fairly ongoing way? Or does it tend to fluctuate moment by moment with the fluctuations in the feel? A little bit of the second, a little bit of the third. The feel is pretty continuous, pretty intense, but there is a rising and falling depending on if I'm able to give it, if I'm able to stop and go into it, sometimes it might multiply and affect times 10 and become quite more than what you wanted to deal with, but I'm assuming that's a part of the process.

Sometimes my work with it will help it flow. The tension does not correspond directly to the feel and what I'm calling the tension is just from the feel having been so consistent, there's a kind of a not breathing and a tensing in that's creating stuff in the back. So it's not really a moment by moment physical muscle tensing around emotional body sensation. It's more the result that the emotional body sensations have been ongoing for so long that you're getting this secondary sensation.

Yes, and there may be a subtle other, from what I'm describing, the thing that I'm aware of is, oh, then literally parts of my body start to hurt and I know it's just from the body just getting tired, the body kind of getting tired from working with the feel. Okay. Now, let me ask some other questions. You talk about the feel breaking up into flow and I'm assuming that happens with some consistency? Oh, you know, whenever I focus in on it, yes. How about the tension reaction? Does it break up into flow? If I'm focusing towards that, yes. That can break up into flow as well. They all do kind of like a rubber band snap back into place a lot.

It just feels like there's just been a momentum of... Okay, they break up into flow but then they can re-solidify. So you can actually have the tension and the feel both turn into flow with your practice. Have you attempted to do that during practice in motion, like walking practice and so forth? Pretty much, yes. I have to, otherwise I wouldn't be able to function.

I wouldn't be doing this today if I wasn't. So you can already get them both to dissolve into flow, which is pretty amazing. But when I'm doing an action, in other words, if I'm stopping and all of my awareness is going into that, I can go total flow.

But when I have to also do this activity or talk to this person or do something like that, all of my attention isn't on it. So there's some congealing. I can do enough flow to function, but I'm not floating on clouds all the way through. I do have periods where something like there's certain activities that help the flow. So when I'm doing a laughing meditation or when I'm facilitating somebody, I literally don't, it pretty much all goes flow during certain activities. But the rest of the time it's having to kind of keep some awareness there and some awareness here just to kind of function.

## 2. WORKING with INTENSE EMOTION ~ Shinzen Young works

with Stephanie Nash

A couple more questions.

Yeah. Is the, which is the source of the greatest distress? Is it the feel or the tension reaction? The feel, absolutely. So, you're not so concerned with dealing with the tension reaction. No, when the feel, yeah. So, the core issue is intensity of activation of emotional body sensation. Absolutely. Okay, that helps me hone in a little bit more on what our target should be.

Right. Have you attempted, well, I should say, as you know, a basic principle in mindfulness is divide and conquer. Case in point, you have divided this experience into, okay, there's the emotional body sensations, that's one component. Then there's the muscle reactions to those, that's the second component. So, that's already a divide and conquer, and that has already given you some relief that the average person wouldn't experience under comparable circumstances.

As you remember, a second axiom is if divide and conquer doesn't work, remember what I always say, subdivide until you do conquer. In this case, have you attempted to break the feel into specific flavors, anger, fear, sadness? In other words, have you applied the noting, feeling, flavor technique to this intense arising? Yes, I have. What I have found to be more helpful is the investigating where exactly I'm feeling what.

Is there clenching here, what are the boundaries, is there more pressure in, is it pushing out? The more I'm investigating it without necessarily putting a label of the quality, that's been a little more successful in helping me go through it. But I can tell you the quality. The subdivide principle can be applied with regards to either the quality, which is the noting, feel, flavor, so that gives you the spectrum, anger, fear, sadness, interest, what have you. But the subdivide principle can also be applied to the spatial aspect of things. So, then that would be like... Do you want to stop for one second? No, let's just let go.

It could happen during a real session. So, you can subdivide into flavors, but you can also subdivide into locations. So, it's an application of the same principle. So, you're saying that subdividing it by individual body locations has turned out to be more productive. Yeah, location and quality of sensation. You mean, so it's a little of both? Yes. Flavor and location, you're getting specific about those.

Yeah. So, you've already made the major thing that I would first try, okay, because you've internalized the algorithm so well. And you say that that does help. Do you note the location, like with the location word, face? No, I haven't been doing that out loud. But you've been tracking the location, and then it sounds like you're staying up for a little while in a location. And moving my awareness around inside of it. Sort of inventory and see what it's like. When I'm inside of it, it's so much easier than when I'm outside of it, for me.

Well, that, once again, sounds like a pretty optimal strategy. Tell me, what are the range of flavors involved? It's primarily a fear flavor, primarily to an almost terror panic. Intense fear is the primary? Intense fear, and there's absolutely sadness. Fear and sadness.

Yeah. Is there any reason for it, or is it just erupting in the body? I have, like I said, I think there was an event or two that triggered it on the outside, but this was out of proportion to that. And I saw that, and as I kind of worked with it, I found that the particular story, the surface story, I even knew, it was silly. But as I let go of there needing to be a story, I kind of

just went into this huge feel.

And as I've gone down in layers, I'm seeing kind of flickers of like, oh, fear of annihilation, that I'll be killed in any moment. There's not a logical thing to this. Yeah, right.

In other words, it's not really coming from the object of external order. I think it tapped, I think whatever this was on the outside, tapped everything like a magnet. I think it drew everything up that resonated at that frequency, and it's just kind of really thrown me at how huge it is.

And they say in Ohio, huge, you're supposed to say huge. But really, it's taken all my technique or skill to be functioning. Okay. So we're having a huge upwelling of fear potential and it sounds like sadness. Yeah, there's sadness.

And are they equally strong, the fear and the sadness? I'd say the fear is probably like the fear is the cake and the sadness is icing that's also going down through the cake. Oh, I get it. To use a food analogy. Actually, that's probably a pretty accurate description because that's what happens.

They tangle and interact. And you say very little mental image or internal talk accompanying this. At first there was a lot, but as I go down...

It's almost pure body. How about very subtle image or talk activation, subliminal, hints of something? The subliminal stuff is where that annihilation came up. Okay, that is starting to suggest some strategies.

Let me ask you further. I say annihilation, but the thing that comes up would be killed. Like anybody at any moment could kill me. It's phobic.

It's fear. And this is good. You've heard me a million times talk about how before we break through these things, they need to become, my phrase is, continuous and ubiquitous. Continuous means unbroken in time. Ubiquitous means everywhere in the body.

We're going towards that. If that's happening, then a process of permanent purification is happening. People, of course, are averse to the notion of letting something like fear or sadness become continuous through time and omnidirectional in the body, ubiquitous in the body. But that's penny-wise and pound-foolish, because being unwilling to pass through that temporarily keeps them always with the sort of Damocles of fear hanging over their head, and likewise with the other negatives like sadness, anger, and so forth. So you have to reach a point where it's completely irrational, completely over-the-top intense, doesn't stop in time, and is in every cubic centimeter of your body, if not of the known universe, in other words, perceived as larger than the body, and say, OK, I would allow this to go on forever. It's at that point that you're getting optimal catharsis, in the sense of cleaning out.

So it's taking a while, but I'm getting a clearer picture of what's going on. Just hearing you say that makes me feel better. I mean, I still want to work, but it's kind of just helpful to have somebody say, because I've just been working on it by myself without talking to anyone, and it's very helpful to hear it. It's just helpful to hear that, you know. Yeah, I would say that this is the stage before people become free.

### 3 DANCES of SELF & WORLD ~Shinzen Young

So what we have here is a summary of self and world as three dances plus a still point. There's the dance of our humanity, which is our three jobs. Create self and world, get over the self and world, improve the self and world. Our tools for doing those jobs are our attentional skills, concentration, sensory clarity, equanimity.

Those skills are applied to and cultivated within our visual, auditory, and somatic sensory experience. Here we have the dance of nature from the expansion, contraction, interplay implied by Planck's constant at the very small level of things. This is the Friedman equation of cosmic density, which is the interplay of expansive matter energy and contracted matter energy that determine the ultimate size and shape of the universe and so forth. This stands for numerous structures in between the largest and the smallest that can be looked upon as having expansive, contractive interplay, like a star is formed by the interplay of the outwardly directed photon pressure from the heat and the inwardly directed force of self-gravity. There are numerous scales.

We see this. This is the dance of expansion, contraction, contrast within the material world or nature. That's reflected by mutually cancelling polarities within the mathematics of the complex number field, which allows for addition. Scaling, which is multiplication by a real number, and twirling, which is imaginary exponentiation or phaser.

This is the stretch-squeeze aspect of generalized multiplication. This is the turn to the right, turn to the left, what's called a phaser, phaser aspect of multiplication, which is the twirling. This is like a dancer that moves forward, moves backwards, stretches out, pulls in, twirls to the right, twirls to the left. We have this abstract dance of the numbers, and we have the dance of nature itself, time, space, matter, and energy. Then we have our senses and our sensory attention skills, which allow us to do the human dance.

This was... And in the center. In the center is the still point of the turning world, which is the source of all of it. This is a way of summarizing, in a modern way, what I would characterize as the Pythagorean agenda. Pythagoras had this revolutionary idea. He lived around the same time that the Buddha did.

I could be off by a century or so, but roughly, 5th, 6th century BC, that kind of thing. This revolutionary idea that the endeavor of the human soul and the nature of nature and the nature of number were a single unity. This is a modern way to think about vindicating the Pythagorean agenda.

Down here, it's three dances. What's sort of cool is that the Pythagoreans were often represented by the pentagram, the five-pointed star. That's where this all comes from. This is homage to my ancestors, the Israelites.

So we have the Greeks and the Semites. All these three dances. Three dances. At the still point of the turning world, neither movement from nor towards, at the still point, there the dance is. But do not call it fixity, where past and future are gathered. If not for the point, the still point, there would be no dance, and there is only the dance.

### 3 Key Moments for Shinzen Young

So in your probably early experiences with meditation, can you recall any key moments when you realized experientially that, whoa, this is shifting the nature of my experience in a way I hadn't expected? Probably the first key moment came a few months into the practice when I started to notice that at the end of an hour set, the voice that had always been screaming in my head, although it was still present, it was like at a distance. It wasn't screaming anymore. I didn't have to listen to it instantly. I never experienced anything like that. It was like the internal talk, by the end of a set, the internal talk hadn't gone away, but it was like at a distance.

It was muffled. That was a whole new world for me. So I went to my teacher and I said, my sitting's getting interesting. He said, oh, in what way? and I described this phenomenon. He said, oh, that's good. You're starting to go into Samadhi, into a state of high concentration.

So then he said, now you have anything that you experience on the cushion, you must eventually be able to experience in daily life. I thought, this is crazy. I could barely get a little hint of that quieting of internal talk. After an hour of focusing on my breath, how can I possibly maintain this in daily life? He said, well, you can't. Just do it. That was a pivotal experience. That was really new and something that who would have ever thought that was possible for someone like me to experience even a few moments of quiet, of internal self-talk.

I would say the second dramatic thing that ever happened to me came at the end of my first week-long Zen retreat in Japan, which was this horrific killer ordeal. It was in the summer, the very first night they broke three sticks over people. The mosquitoes were an inch long, they could bite you through your clothes.

It was like, Japan is very moist, so in summer you're just sweating. You're not allowed to move at all, no matter what. By the way, this is a good example of what I mean by horrific ordeals that I would like people not to have to go through by working smart with precise vocabulary. Because if we talk about this, people say, hey, who would ever put themselves through that? They don't see themselves in that scenario.

You don't have to do this kind of thing. The first time I did do that kind of thing, by the end I nearly had lost my marbles. I was starting to have insane ideation, literally insane thoughts, like a torture victim, basically. My whole body was shaking with pain. I thought I was going to cry. I was sure I was just going to start bawling.

It was the last sit of the last day. I was just holding on. My whole body was shaking.

I was just holding on for dear life. I realized I was about to cry. Not just cry, I mean bawl, like break down. I started to scream in my talk space, you're not a baby, don't cry. You're not a baby, don't cry.

Over and over again. Suddenly, for no reason, I dropped into equanimity, big time. It wasn't just the quiet that I described before. My entire being dropped into a spontaneous equanimity. The way you know that's happened is the pain level is exactly the same, but the suffering level dramatically reduces, or perhaps even goes away. In this particular instance, the suffering completely went away. I went from near fainting level of pain to my body totally relaxed.

Yes, the internal talk turned off. The pain turned into a kind of flowing energy that was just massaging my being. It was like I could have stayed there forever. The physical body was literally breaking up into a flow of spirit. Then the bell rang that ended that sit. I was never the same because you can hear somebody say this, but if you haven't experienced it why

should you believe it? I would have never believed that that could be the case.

That was extremely dramatic. A few years later, one day at the end of a day, I sat down. I hadn't meditated that day. I was doing self-inquiry at that time, asking who am I. At the end of the day, I sat down and I said, who am I? I looked at my boundaries and they vanished. They never came back.

I was never the same, ever. I didn't sit, I just got up. I got up.

I just started to walk around and communicate with the walls. They were like, me. So was the whole world. When I went to bed that night, I thought, well that's going to go away. I woke up the next morning, it was there. It never went away, ever. My whole life. I've been privileged to live. How long ago was that? That was after I'd meditated for about four years.

So it's been four years now, so that was like 35, 36 years ago. It has nothing to do with how concentrated you are. That was obviously a huge watershed. That's what gives me the confidence to teach.



### 3 Things Shinzen got from Joshu Sasaki Roshi

I've heard you speak of enlightened masters, and you spoke of Roshi as being a master's master when you met him. And I've heard you tell stories of other teachers that you've lived with in your encounters.

I've never heard you, when you've talked about your influences, of what's influenced your teaching, I've heard you talk about an Uba Kin lineage or a Mahasi Sayadaw lineage in terms of what they brought in noting or body sensation. But the only teacher I've heard you really speak of, and you shift totally when you talk about him, is Roshi. Meaning Sasaki Roshi. Roshi is a general title in Japanese for any Zen master is called a Roshi.

But yes, Joshu Sasaki Roshi. And if there are other enlightened masters that might come into this conversation, we'll weave that too. But my interest here would be to have you talk about what it's like to be in his presence and work with him, and what having this man's, I don't know, energy input into your life, what that is for you as a teacher, because I don't know who else you go to for your support. When I came back to the United States, I realized I still needed a teacher, but I didn't have anybody that I could go to within the tradition that I wanted to work in, which is the mindfulness tradition. And when I came back here for a few years, I was drawn to mindfulness because it could be extracted from the cultural milieu and the religious matrix of Buddhism and presented as a fully secular practice.

And so that appealed to me, and I liked the systematic nature of mindfulness. But by the time that had happened, I was probably the senior mindfulness teacher in my part of the world, but I needed somebody vastly senior to myself to kick my ass. And the only place I could find it was in the Zen tradition, which is not the tradition I really wanted to work in, although I was familiar with it because I had lived in Japan and so forth. And Sasaki Roshi was certainly the senior Zen master in the United States at that time, and he's now arguably the senior living Buddhist master in the world at 102, having started his monastic practice at the age of 13, do the math.

How long has this guy been practicing? I had to study with someone, so it wasn't really in the tradition I was drawn to. Do all teachers think I need someone to kick me in the ass? No, some people. A lot do, but some people go off on a... that's one of the ways that the wheels sort of come off if a teacher doesn't put themselves under some other teacher.

They get a certain degree of experience and then they're sort of off, but now they don't have feedback loops and their students won't give them feedback because they're in awe of them and problems can develop. So I wanted to make sure I'd seen... That's very healthy of you to have said I need somebody to...

I think it's just a safety, it's like a safety net, you know, even though at that time I had practiced for a long time, I still wanted someone else. I've gotten three things from him. One is I learned not to suppress my sense of self. In my initial years of practice, I thought, oh, the Buddha says enlightenment is no self. If I have any sense of self, then I'm not making progress. And suddenly I was suppressing self-referential body sensations, mental images, and internal talk, the stuff that's self-referential, that gives you the sense of self moment by moment. I was suppressing that.

I was trying to get rid of that. And Sasaki Roshi is a very balanced teacher. So he teaches that yes, there's no self, and then there's full self. And those are both no self experiences. Self is nothing whatsoever.

As T.S. Eliot said, the still point between two waves of the sea. And then there is the wave, which is the personality arising not as a thing, but as a doing. And I've been suppressing the

doing of self. And so he disabused me of that imbalance in my practice. That was the first thing that happened. By his example, or did he say? No, by his direct teachings.

Okay. By all, he constantly emphasized that we're always cycling between experiences of zero self and the re-arising of the feeling, thinking self. And then it goes back to zero. And this is a natural process. Everybody participates in it. Enlightened people realize they're participating in it. And really enlightened people participate in it wholeheartedly without preference, one side versus the other. So I got, he disabused me of my notion of preferring no self to fullness of, to unfixated self.

Okay. Then he gave me the paradigm of impermanence in terms of expansion and contraction, which represents a vast generalization of the early Buddhist concept of anicca or impermanence. And it's a far more flexible and encompassing model and puts a whole positive spin on what in early Buddhism was sort of looked at as part of suffering and had a negative spin. So I got that expansion contraction paradigm, which very nicely maps onto mathematics and physics and it's just a very, very useful way of guiding people into the experience of impermanence.

I got that from him. The other thing I got from him was sort of the direct vibe of when, because when you're with him, he's space expanding and contracting and that tends to reach out and sort of pull you into his world. But then you have to go back to the meditation hall and you have to internalize that zap of energy. See, some people, they get Shaktipat, they get a zap of energy from a teacher, but then what do they do immediately after that? Well, they sing bhajans to the teacher and they talk about how great the teacher is and et cetera, et cetera. So it becomes a whole devotional thing. And then they're just a leaky capacitor that loses that Shakti and then they need another recharging.

Okay. What I like about Zen is they never talk about it, but when you go in for the Zen interview, you get a zap of the flow of nothingness from that teacher. But then what do you do? You sit around and then sing the praises of that teacher and get into a whole cult? No, they send you back to the meditation hall where it's cold in the winter or there's bugs biting you in the summer. You're sleepy, you're getting beat up, you're getting yelled at.

All of this shit is happening. How can you apply that flow that you got from the teacher to this situation? Meaning can you internalize it and truly make it yours so you become like that teacher, not a devotee of that teacher? That's the difference between the guru zap in one tradition and in the Zen tradition. And I got that from him within that context. So those three things, disabusing me of my subtle tendency to suppress the self, giving me this incredibly powerful paradigm that maps nicely onto science with regards to impermanence as the fundamental insight, and then a sort of direct transfer of that flow of impermanence from him, but within the context of making me strong and independent of him because I would immediately have to go and actually apply and internalize it and make it my own.

### 3 Watershed Moments - Shinzen Remembers the Self Separating from the Source

There's the very instant when something starts. And that's the primordial perfection of the source acting.

And that is the world that we lived in, in infancy. I have vague recollections of that time. It's taken years of practice to remember what it was like. I remember three watersheds.

I have a vague recollection of when I was just expanding, contracting effortless space instead of having objectified experience of self and world. I can remember that. I can remember discovering the power of crying.

If I cried, I would get this attention. That was a really major epiphany. And then I remember this horrible, horrible thing happening. It just sort of came on. It came out of nowhere.

And it just came on like gangbusters. I started to worry about things. I started to have thoughts and fears.

I don't know how old, but I'm imagining two, three, four, something like that. It was like, what is this? This wasn't here before. Suddenly I was worried and afraid and thinking about stuff. That was the arising of the inner system as a self. I can remember it coming on.

It's like, what is this? What's happening to me? It's like, why am I scared and thinking? Of course, I didn't have those words for it, but in retrospect. I can remember those watersheds. We can go back as adults with our adult competency and have the best of both worlds. We can experience, because our first world is never really lost, our very first world. We're now here, now always, always a condition of complete simplicity.

### 3. WORKING with INTENSE EMOTIONS ~ Shinzen Young guides

Stephanie Nash

It's interesting too because when I had a physical issue a year ago where I had excruciating pain in my body, what happened was it felt like my skin all over my body was burned, was singeing very hot. And the neurologist and everybody said it was probably in response to the pain. They said it's just your body's in an alarm alert mode. That's getting activated by this fear. So like I have that in addition, so you're talking about hot, you know.

I've got that on the outside, this kind of singeing. That will definitely, that directly corresponds with the intensity of the feeling. So that's enough, isn't it? It's a lot to work with, but actually I need a little more information. Do you think that it's interacting with subtle levels of talk or image? Very very subtle. What do you mean interacting? By that I mean that the fear and sadness might be intensified by subtle subliminal activations of visual or auditory thinking. What I think is happening, and this is just having been working with it now for a while, I think it's like if there's a deck of cards that's all the images and thoughts that we have in a pool that one hit something and it went down and if there were like little shavings of metal, I'm sorry I went back away from deck of cards, little shavings, all of those came up and each one of those is an image or it could be image or talk stuff, but it's just like, and so you might get little flicks like of popcorn, but it might not be enough to go, oh yes, that's when I was five. That's exactly what I mean by that. And when that comes up it can poke, it can, it can kind of like add a little bit of a wood shaving to the fire, but it's like the feel called that up and then that might poke in the feel a little bit, but if I stay with the feel they just kind of hang out.

So the answer to the question is yes, there is interaction with subtle image, which is significant, and also characteristic of catharsis, although it may primarily come up as body feel flavors, subliminal auditory and visual thinking often enters into the gestalt, especially the visual, because people don't usually hear hell, they usually see hell, although in theory you can hear it too, but image space is where the monsters are that might be linked to all of this. So that gives me some of the more information that I need. Okay now believe it or not, yet more questions, okay, because well, because we've got to see what's really going on and I don't. You're doing your house.

Yeah, well you interviewed me. You're doing your house MD. This is called differential diagnosis baby. These are my huge diagnostic skills.

Okay so, let's see here. Have you ever had the experience of having strong fear that was pervasive through the body so dissolved into flow that it no longer caused you suffering? Yes. How about sadness? Have you ever done that? Okay, so then you've already done what we're going to be working towards. We're going to be working towards that experience yet again, because it's a matter of, I mean basically, what, let's see, one, two, three, four, maybe there's four kinds of human beings. I mean there's a lot of ways to classify humans, right? But maybe one way to classify all human beings is there's most human beings who have never had the experience of physical pain flowing so completely that it turned into a flavor of catharsis rather than a flavor of suffering. Most humans have never had that experience. So that's most humans. Then there are the humans that have at least had that experience once. Then there are the humans that have had that same experience but with regards to rage, terror, or grief.

That's a whole other thing than physical pain in terms of what it's like when that breaks up. So we've determined that... And I think harder. Incomparably harder. Because pain is just pain. The emotional sensations have been honed by evolution to grip us and control us and

distort us.

They've been honed by evolution for that task. That's what hell is. Hell is rage, terror, grief, shame, flavors that have become so activated that they're able to convince you that not only will this be all you ever experience from now on, they're actually able to convince you that you never experienced anything else.

They have that much distorting power so that it seems like eternal in both directions. That would be hell. Purgatory is when you've experienced those sensations enough that they can't cause that illusion anymore, but they're still there and you're working with them. And then the threshold between purgatory and heaven is when it turns into flow that we've been talking about. So believe it or not, one other question, besides fear and sadness, are there hints of any other flavors in there? Like anger or shame specifically? I've actually looked specifically for them.

I think the shame flavor can... Like if something happens in the extra world that embarrasses me, I feel that shame and that can trigger all this. Is it part of the present gestalt, the shame flavor, or is it pretty much we're dealing with sad and had? If we call fear had. Just for alliteration.

I know, I'm going to go for it. Because there's mad, sad, glad, and had. You're changing my feel flavors here. Don't worry. It's okay. They'll come back.

I'll get back to hell soon. Okay. Here's what's interesting. You know that heat I talked about in the body? It shares territory with shame and embarrassment in terms of the flesh. And so it can trigger it. So they all kind of interlinked in that way? It's all information that I need to do the guidance. And I think I have enough.

## 4. WORKING with INTENSE EMOTION - GUIDED MEDITATION (1 of 2))

Okay. So, let's do it. Okay.

Okay, so take a moment to stretch up and settle in and focus for just a second on physical relaxation into the posture. Okay, we're going to start by working in the fierce, sad system. So at any given instant, there'll be exactly one of four states, just fear, just sad, both or neither. We're going to ignore everything else. We're just going to penetrate that one system of affective somesthesia. My way of talking make sense? Well, until the last two words. I know what you meant.

I know, I know. That's Greco-Roman for emotional type body sensation. Thank you. I love it though.

I know. So, I'd like you to note fear, sad, fear and sad, or none, one of those four. You want fear and sad or both? Just use fear and sad with a Boolean and operation.

We'll get the four logically possible states of the fierce sadness system. Any questions about that? Okay, good. Out loud? Yeah, for starters. Fear and sad. Fear and sad. Fear and sad. Fear and sad.

Fear and sad. Okay, good. Now go to mental labels. See the labels rather than speaking them.

Is it still mostly both at the same time? Yes. Okay, good. Now we're going to work just with the fear.

I'm assuming that there is one or more areas of local intensity for the fear. Is that correct? Yes. Is it one or are there several disconnected? There's probably one primary one that spreads out and has little branches to it, and then there's a little bit of a journey to a secondary one for the most part.

Okay. So the primary one spreads branches. The primary one is right at the center of my chest, like right in between my rib cage. How broadly are the branches spread through the body? It kind of comes down around to the side and in there, but it kind of spreads out a bit like the core, the center is kind of there in a kind of big, odd shape, and then there are ways in which I think it kind of reaches subtly, like subtle veins kind of going out around to the middle of my back. Okay.

Excellent detection skill. I'm assuming that the subtler ramifications are of less intensity? Absolutely. Here's what we're going to do. We're going to just work with fear. Each time you note sad, I would like you to zoom out to the subtle ramifications, focus on them only. Every time I note sad? I'm sorry, every time you note fear. Go out to the subtle ramifications and work towards perfect equanimity with those subtle sensations.

Because they're subtle, it may be possible to have complete openness with them, even though you can't do so with the local intensities that are at the epicenter of it. So we're going to use the zoom out option on the noting. You're going to zoom out to cover the subtle spread and work towards perfect equanimity with that. And don't concern yourself with the local splash at the center at all, just with the global ripple in a rhythm with the mental labels of fear.

Any questions about that? No, you want me... I'll just repeat it back. I'm going to keep noting fear with mental labels, but I'm going to, when I note fear, zoom out to the subtler tributaries, so to speak, of the experience of fear in my body, not tuning into the main Grand Central Station part of it. That's perfect.

And by mental label I mean think toward fear, to indicate that that's the flavor. And then you zoom out, and then I'm just going to have you do that on your own for a few minutes. To show that one, that you are focusing on that.

I want to do that pretty good. Is there any hint of flow in the global spread of the fear? It's pretty fluid? Yeah, it flows. It's interesting. I tend to be flowy in general, but when I worked with this, at first I got little hits of nausea. I started to feel a little nauseous.

Other flavors. Yeah, and then a little ticklish, but if I just kind of kept with it, those would just stay. They dissipate. So you're able to get the global component in the fear flavor to flow. Can that flow spread into the local intensity so that you get a local global flow with the fear? You know, I think I started to naturally start to do that, and I think that's when the nausea started.

I think my body... Let's go for local global flow now. So that means you'll remember that there's, in my standard formulation of the noting technique, you remember zoom in, zoom out, zoom both ways. So we're going to zoom both ways, out to the perimeter, to the weak sensations there, and ride the momentum of the flow that's there, and simultaneously zoom into the core intensity and see if you can get them to get that local splash, global ripple. While keeping the zooming, so simultaneously. Yeah, you're zooming in and out, into the core, out to the perimeter, and you're doing that precisely to facilitate the spread of the global flow into the local intensity. So the awareness is moving in and out. In and out at the same time.

You have a phrase that you came up with. Sliding. You're going to slide in both ways. You're going to slide out with your awareness and let it facilitate a global circulation of fear, and you're going to slide in and let that facilitate a local circulation of fear. So you get both the intense areas and the peripheral areas as a single fear flow.

## 6. WORKING with INTENSE EMOTIONS - Discussion & Alternative

### Strategies

I'm recognizing how I've been keeping them separate and keeping that line between them and when I allow them to just kind of do that, the kind of joy I talked about before with the fear, a very intense version of that and then it kind of seems to ignite this kind of PT-like energy up the body and it gets very hot. So you're getting hot and rapturous with fear and sadness. Yes I am.

This is what most people would say is rather counterintuitive but your facial expression proves it. Yeah. Okay, good. It's really interesting though because as it does I find myself wanting to comment on it and I'll go off and talk and then it loses it a little bit.

Yeah, it's got to be done purely in the body. Because the comments and then you know. It does trigger some little topics to go, this is all about it. That's right, but your use of practice allows you to stop that and not sort of go down in that. Well plus there's motivation to kind of stay with this.

It's intrinsically rewarding. Now next step, see if you can have the fear and the sadness dancing with and through each other with your eyes open. And you may find defocusing the eyes initially helpful. So we can maintain it somewhat into a more ordinary experience. It's interesting when I am, as I kind of go in and out here as I do it, and I'm going to talk while keeping my eyes open, but I'm getting to where I'm honing in on the one specific place in the body they both share in a powerful way.

And if I can just kind of keep track of flow there, letting it be, whether it's the red or blue, you know, it kind of helps me maintain it with my eyes open more. Good. Now see if you can keep some contact with that even after we make some eye contact. It may be a little trickier. This is what we just did here is probably one of the missing pieces of the solution to the situation that you described.

I'm not sure it's all of the missing pieces. I've got a few other ideas besides this. But I think for this session. This is a good one. For this session, one epiphany is worth the price of admission.

A little bit of money on the table. You haven't done this before, this theme of different flavors. Well, I remember interdigitation was a word you used to use. And what's so interesting is as soon as you guided me on this, I thought, I'll guide somebody else in this. I didn't think of it for me.

I was just too busy. Oh, you remember to do this. You remember to get the flavors to do this. Oh, I'll have other people do this. Right, but you didn't remember that you could do it for yourself.

I was just, my circuits were just so full, I guess. Well, you know, that goes to a very general principle in the way I set up my approach to meditation, which is that the assumption is that when people face real challenges, even people without a background in practice, if you interactively guide them, will be able to have pretty dramatic experiences pretty consistently. Dramatic, positive experiences.

It has also been my experience that people that are quite good at meditation, when they're faced with real life challenges, can easily forget. But all you need is somebody to do this. And it's like, oh yeah, I knew how to do that. And then now you're set.



This is one session. We don't need 20 years of therapy here. It's like, okay, now you sort of know what to do. So I think that's excellent. But I will, for subsequent sessions, remind me that I had some other ideas of, well I can actually just tell you.

Just tell me now and then I can always replay it and go, remember you had this and this. So the other thing is that, okay, one missing piece was, well, the two flavors have to simultaneously flow and through each other. Another possible missing piece is that you're getting significant interaction with subliminal thinking. And you might want to look in that direction. And the way you look in that direction, what I was going to have you work with is a special exercise that, with all the years we've done, I'm not sure we've ever done this one, but I'll ask you. Have we ever done noting feel sources? What that means is, I have you note if there's no fear, you say no fear. If there is fear but it's not triggered by anything you're aware of, you say just fear. And then you specify if the fear has been triggered by fear from image, fear from talk, fear from sound, fear from sight, or fear from touch.

No, we haven't done that. We've mentioned fear, I call that noting feel sources. And feel can be generic or specific.

That was the next thing I had in the hopper to try after this. Because what may be happening is that you're getting significant triggering from other senses that are activating the fear in real time. And usually what, you know how I always say, okay, what is science in a nutshell? How much of what, when, and where, interacting in what ways, and changing at what rates. Typically I emphasize the what, the where, and the rates of change. But some of the special techniques are designed to elucidate the interactions, specifically what's triggering what. And I find that when people are going through significant intractable fear experiences, or emotion in general, but especially fear, literally a few minutes of noting what is triggering that fear in terms of the broad sensory categories. So we can now detect no fear, fear but not triggered by anything, okay, no fear, fear, fear from image, fear from talk, and especially subtle image and subtle talk, the subliminal stuff. The way you know that's happening is you get a tug towards image space or a tug towards talk space, no content awareness at all, but the next instant there's a spike in the fear in the body. Now you know that the subconscious mind...

I'm quite aware of having that. Yeah, the subconscious. Well it turns out if you ask yourself, if you constrain yourself in real time to know did it come from image, talk, sight, sound, or the physicality of the body, because it's got to be one of those five, that keeping track of the whole system, somehow that vastly reduces the overwhelm.

So when you're doing that, you're zooming out, for example, and for me I'm less aware, I can tell when I've gone to image space, but I'm not seeing tangible image at this time. And I'm aware of talk. That is a sign of subliminal and hence highly significant activity. And I'm aware of that with talk, and with talk I can hear a little more of a rumble, but I still can't. So do I have awareness equally distributed between image and talk? You don't have to actually worry about how to distribute your awareness, because most people discover they know as soon as you give them...

# Advanced and Specialized meditation on the phone. How phone retreats work. ~ Shinzen Young

So you're off and running, in four hours you've got the beginnings of a mindfulness practice.

And then the core curriculum is set up so that there are sort of level one programs in the five ways and there's a part two that's sort of like a more detailed, deeper version. And you take that the next month. So after you take part one, one month, and part two the next month, now you know that entire way. So that in theory, in say ten months, if you were to participate every month, you would have learned all five of them.

But you may not want to learn all five, you may want to just learn one of them and stay with that. So we have the intro, we have core curriculum that teaches the part one and part two of each of the five ways. And then we have, for people once they learn those techniques, they have deepening retreats, sharpening retreats, and special application retreats.

The sharpening retreats, I guide them interactively with special exercises that sharpen their ability and then the theme retreats, they apply the techniques to certain themes like dealing with pain or dealing with emotions or dealing with behavior change or decision making, any practical, many practical applications that they can have. Wow, that's interesting. So, yeah. So, it's a very carefully organized curriculum and basically I would say to summarize it, and it doesn't cost appreciable money, in fact if you don't have money it doesn't cost anything. And we tell you how to get really cheap long distance calling. So what happens is people call in, they're socializing, then there's an hour and a half guidance around the theme, which may involve Q&A.; Then people hang up.

So people can, you're guiding but people can actually ask you questions. They can interact with me in the group setting and then after an hour and a half everyone hangs up and they practice on their own for an hour. During that period of time they can stretch and get coffee.

Oh, so you're not sitting there for four hours straight. But also during that period of time they can call me personally. 90 people? No, typically what happens is there's about 60 people and about one out of ten has a need during that program to talk to me and they have my private number.

We give out, when you register, my private telephone number that goes with the TERF. So it's usually about 10% of the people need to talk to me and I can usually handle the most of those in that hour period. So you actually get a chance to talk, if you really need it, one-on-one with me. If I back up then I make an appointment with you to talk to you later that day or very soon afterwards.

So it serves as the potential for touching base personally with a teacher any month you need that. And then after that hour? After that hour they come back and we have a group Q&A; for a half an hour and then they... Everybody hears, everybody asks questions.

Everybody hears the other's questions. And then there's another hour of guidance and then there's a little more socializing. And four hours have passed and you've had four hours of a retreat-like environment.

All the features that you'd get at a residential retreat, a talk, guidance, chance to work on your own, chance to talk to a teacher, chance to hear other people's questions and

experience. It's all packed into four tightly organized hours. Don't have to leave your home, don't have to leave your family, don't have to mess with your work schedule.

Anybody can get four hours on some weekend. Now I've got a question, if I've never meditated before and I'm going to be doing one of these four hour retreats, do I have to get those cushions people have or how do I know how to sit? If you go to [basicmindfulness.org](http://basicmindfulness.org) there's a document which is about the posture. Oh, okay. So I don't have to like burn incense or... No, there's no particular environment needed. I mean it's nice if it's quiet but it's not required. You mean if kids are running in and out? That doesn't matter because that's the whole point in mindfulness, you deal with what is. So you don't have to burn incense. It's nice if you can get off and it's a quiet environment but if you can't, that's just part of what we work with.

# After Enlightenment? Love Deeply & Act Effectively ~ Shinzen

## Young

Speaking of motivation, why do this practice, if someone asks you? If you had to summarize and sort of like simplify, if you had to just say one thing, why do this practice? I would say so as to be of optimal service to others, if I had to just say one thing. There is this series of pictures from China, but it's also found in Japan, Korea, Vietnam, called the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures. The first YouTube that we ever put up was a talk that I gave on the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures here, God only knows how long ago, maybe Steph knows. I can look it up.

My teachers used them. It's a metaphor that sort of lost probably North Americans, but anyone from Asia that grew up, particularly the southern parts of Asia, would know what the metaphor was. Young boys go off into the forest and they look for a young water buffalo. It said ox, but it's actually a water buffalo. They have these very big horns. They find a juvenile water buffalo and they catch it and they make a relationship with it and tame it.

It's a lifelong relationship. Then as the boy grows up, often they're peasants, so they're going to be a farmer and the ox grows up and the ox is used for tilling the fields and also to ride on into town or for pulling carts and things like that. It's a metaphor for the process of enlightenment. It starts out that you're completely clueless. You're just this kid wandering around without a clue, which is where everyone starts pretty much. Then you get a clue. The clue is you see the footprints of the ox. You haven't seen the ox, but there's an indirect indication that this critter exists. That would be maybe you read a book or you heard a dharma talk or maybe something in your life sort of told you that there's more to life than what most people think there is in terms of what's possible. So you see the footprints.

Then it builds on that. You follow the footprints until you see the tail. All of you have reached the point where you've seen the tail. If you had a good meditation, and we've all had good meditations, right? That's sort of seeing the tail. It's not really the same as seeing the ox, though.

That's a little different. Then you see just sort of the rear end of the ox, but you are seeing the ox. Those are those glimpses that many of you have had of, oh, it's not a stream entry, but it's sort of like in that direction, but it evaporates. Now you've actually seen the ox, at least part of it. Then there is seeing the whole ox, and it's like there for you. Now that could happen suddenly. Often that happens rather gradually over a period of many years. So that's really wonderful.

So the ox represents the nature of nature, the nature of consciousness. There's a word in East Asian languages, in Mandarin Chinese, it's shin. In Japanese, it's almost identical, shin, without a tone.

Korean is shim. Vietnamese is tam, which sounds more like the Cantonese sam, as in dim sum, actually, which means to warm your heart or touch your heart, literally. So it means heart, but it also means consciousness, sensory experience, motor experience, broadly, translates cheetah in Sanskrit.

So this is the shin-yo. This is the ox that represents the nature of consciousness, aka sensory and motor experience. So now you've seen the ox, you've seen the nature of consciousness, but you're not done by any means. In fact, you've just begun the challenge.

As wonderful as it is to have actually seen the nature of consciousness, which is sometimes called the Buddha nature, or the activity of the Dharmakaya, the body of the absolute, but it

could also be called the activity of impermanence, aka expansion and contraction. That's the paradigm that I like to use. So once you've seen it, good, but now you've got to get on it. You've got to rope it, and then you've got to learn to ride it. And that's very challenging because that ox can buck very intensely. In other words, stuff happens in your life, in the world, and the ability to stay on that ox, no matter how intensely it bucks, is a long, long training. But at some point, you can stay on. And then you ride it home.

It just carries you home. Now, that takes you to the eighth of the pictures. So there's an oral tradition, not a written tradition, but an oral tradition in Soto Zen. And the only reason I know about it is that a Soto Zen master told me. So on the internet, you can see one of my YouTubes where I actually do something that most people in the Buddhist world don't do.

I actually describe the moment that I saw the whole ox. But there's a tradition in Zen that you're supposed to go to a senior master and sort of describe the experience you've had and then see what they have to say about it. So I was in the US at that time, so I wasn't in contact with my teachers in Japan. And the only person that I actually personally knew that was like a Zen master of great stature and great seniority relative to me at the time was Mayuzumi Roshi. Some of you may have heard of him. His lineage is very prominent in US Buddhism, Zen at this point. So he was the only Roshi that I knew.

But I didn't know him very well. I talked occasionally because I was living in the Buddhist ghetto, what we used to call the Buddhist ghetto, is in Koreatown. It's like where New Hampshire and Vermont and Olympic, that area there. A lot of Buddhist centers. There was a Korean center, Talma Sa, where Sun Tzu-Nim was, Sun Tzu-Nim, Master Sung San. There was Zen Center of LA where Mayuzumi Roshi was. There was the International Buddhist Meditation Center where I was living.

So Zen Center of LA was sort of down the street and over the years, you know, we've done things together. But I didn't really know Mayuzumi Roshi very well. But he was the only person that I could think to go to. I had a bit of trepidation because I didn't really know him that well and I'm going to like talk about this thing. You know, a lot of times some of those Zen masters are sort of ferocious. I mean, I knew what I experienced.

I wasn't really nervous about that, but I thought there's a pretty good probability, you know, the general style in Zen is no matter what it is, you're wrong. That is a general style. That may or may not be the best pedagogical approach.

You'll notice that is not the approach I use, sort of the opposite of that. But I had come to expect, you know, whatever it is, you're wrong. So I was fully expecting him to say, you're full of shit, kid, get out of here.

But I don't think it would have bothered me a lot, but it would have been a little embarrassing. But he did not say that at all. He said the very opposite of that.

So yeah, that's it. But you're just starting. And that was a long, that was decades ago. And he was right, just starting.

So because you see the asuna, you got to get on it and then all this stuff is going to happen and you got to stay on it. So I asked him, is it okay to tell people? And he said, well, if you think that it will help inspire people, yeah, you can actually tell people. And he told me about the oral transmission in the Soto Zen school about the ox-fording pictures, as we were talking about that as a metaphor.

So he said that in this oral tradition, which I don't know if it's written down anywhere, but I know I heard it directly from him. The last three pictures are not actually stages. The path ends at eight, wait, seven, eight, nine, ten, yeah, at seven. So what is eight, nine, and ten? So eight is just a blank page with absolutely nothing on it.

Nine is a picture of trees and mountains, just like ordinary stuff, the natural world. And ten is a picture of this sort of Santa Claus-like guy named Hotei in Japanese, walking into the marketplace with a bag full of goodies and just passing them out to people. And the caption in Chinese says entering the marketplace with hand outstretched, four characters.

And he said that those last three represent the tai so yu, that's Japanese, ti shan, yong in Mandarin Chinese. They represent the substance, the appearance, and the ultimate use of enlightenment. So the substance is the blank page, the appearance is everything, and the ultimate use, the ultimate motivation, why we do this in the end, is to be a sort of approachable ordinary person who has this secret bag of goodies that you can pass out to anyone who realizes what you have. And you're in the marketplace. Well, let me just say this, the word for marketplace in Persian, you know the word. It's bazaar, which is also where our word bazaar comes from. So in many parts of the world, of the pre-modern world, the marketplace is pretty wild. It's like all of life is just sort of hanging out there. So you're walking into the bazaar, the bizarreness of the world, completely looking like you belong there, and anyone can approach you and you have these goodies to give out. So that is the yu, or the yu in Japanese, which means the purpose, the goal, the ultimate activity. Why you did all the other things, why you did all that work with the ox, is so that you could be of significant service to the world.

And my first teacher emphasized this a lot. He was a tea master, and when I would go to talk about practice, I'd go to his house. Now when you think of a house, you're thinking of an American house, okay? You've got to think of a Japanese house, which is like about one-tenth the size of an American house. So it was just a couple little rooms, so I was, we didn't be in this room, and he'd make tea for me. And he'd always point out that he had this picture of the Buddha on the wall, a painting, monochrome. And it wasn't the usual sort of pictures of the Buddha. The Buddha is walking, and he's walking down the mountain. He's leaving the monastery, so to speak, the ashram, and he's coming down into the city. And he would always say, that's your image, that's the icon that I want you to remember why I'm teaching you all of these things.

It's called in Japanese, shussan no shaka, Chushan, leaving the mountain. So if I had to sum it all up, it's to live, to serve from love. So where does that come from? How does that come about for a practitioner? Because I can assure you that that wasn't the kind of person I was early in life. I was early in life, the very antithesis of that person. I didn't like being around people at all. I just wanted to be left alone. And I was always uncomfortable around people in general. And I was particularly uncomfortable around people who were uncomfortable themselves, who would be going through something bad in their life or whatever. I just could not handle being around that kind of thing.

So what happened? Well, four things happened. I took on this practice and it was really hard and I failed over and over and over and over again. Couldn't concentrate, couldn't handle the retreats. First two retreats I ever did, I bailed out in the middle.

So I got to get the hell out of here. Probably shouldn't tell you that. I'm a good role model.

But it's true. I mean, halfway through, I just knew for sure that the best thing that I could do to nurture my spiritual essence is get the hell out of here now. And then I'd leave and it's like all the pressure was off and it's like, why did I do that? You know, it happened once and you'd think you'd learn, but then it happened again.

The next retreat, halfway through, it's like, I'm out of here. So I would say my early experiences were experiences of being miserable and of not being able to implement a technique. Basically, experiences of failing with the practice. At the time, my interpretation was, of course, I can't do this and I'm no good at this. I'm a failure. I'm a screw up.

At the time, that was the impression. It was only years later, years later, looking back, that I realized that those initial experiences of misery and frustration were hugely important for

the big picture of my growth. Hugely important. I did not know it at the time, but the seeds of compassion were being planted. Because the first noble truth of Buddhism, the truth of suffering, was so much in my face that it left this impression regarding the importance of not suffering.

So that I would say that one of the important factors for me personally in changing, becoming a very different kind of person, was failing with this practice and finding this practice difficult and just being miserable. It was Japan, it was zero tolerance policy. We tell you the first day, it's okay to move after the bell.

Well, not in Zen, not in Japan. You move a muscle and they yell at you or hit you. It would be like in the morning, I can still remember, even though this is almost 50 years ago, I can still remember sitting there and it's like cold and my nose is running, but you can't move and you definitely cannot snuffle.

It's like this festoons of snot just dripping down, like moistening my clothes and I'm sitting there with this mudra and I'm just miserable. But in retrospect, I realize I was growing and changing in really important ways, just didn't realize it at the time. So I would say that one of the main factors that leads one to the ultimate goal of this practice is the difficulty that we experience early on with this practice.

Okay, what other factors? Well I mentioned my teacher. I was indoctrinated in the philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism. I was told as a concept, in the end this is why you do it.

I think that that indoctrination was a good thing. I'm glad I was told. And guess what? Now you've been told. So I hope you will accept that point of view.

So another reason was, well, people told me and I believe them. That's the Bodhisattva spirit. It's Mahayana. So that's a factor, just playing up indoctrination in a certain philosophy about practice. What else? Role models. I saw the same pattern over and over and over again. Different countries, teachers of different race. But it was always the same pattern, which is years of intense practice.

And then they're just in the office all day, available to the world. The first time I saw that pattern was with someone that some of you know. She's passed away, but her name was Nicola Geiger. How many of you remember Nicola? Well, that's quite a few.

Yeah, that was quite a while ago. So how can I put it? If you saw the movie Schindler's List, well, that's what her world at the age of 20 was. But not because she was Jewish, actually. She was the opposite. She was from a German aristocratic family. When she was very little, she joined the Deutsche Mädchenbund, the Hitler Youth for the girls, the women, the girls. Because she's just a little girl. She doesn't know any better. It's like all earth and Volksgeist and seemed very appealing. But then when she grew up, she realized the evil of the Nazis.

She was part of this group that there was actually, there was the French resistance. That's called the self arising. Okay. I need to see you fully manifest. Okay. That's pretty good. I didn't mean to humiliate itself. I mean, I'm so happy that everyone is paying attention.

See, now she passed her koan. Say what? I turned off the recording, so I want to put the recording back on. Okay. That was good.

You passed the koan. Okay. Okay. We'll just wait. I want to see if you can really pass the koan. Everybody watch Betsy, you fuck.

Very intrusive device. There we go. I'm so proud of you.

So from the sublime to the ridiculous and now back to the sublime. So yeah, there was the, you know, about the French resistance and whatever, but there were actually people in Germany that were fighting the Nazis secretly when they were in full power during World

War II and she was part of that group. They made a movie about them called The White Rose and if you see what happens in that movie, well that's what happened to her and her friends. So just horrible, horrible, horrible.

But fortunately she had been taught how to meditate by her father from the time she could crawl. They were associated with the writer Hermann Hesse and you may know the League of Journeymen to the East. There's this classic book called The Journey to the East. This is oral history. I haven't confirmed it, but apparently that actually existed and Nikola's father was part of it and they were Christian, but they were Buddhist influenced during the Weimar Republic between the wars in Germany. Anyway, so she had been taught how to meditate, which is the only reason that she was able to not be completely destroyed by the things that happened.

So when I met her, the way I met her is I'd been a Zen monk in Kyoto and you go on begging rounds, I mentioned about that. So there are these rules, very strict rules. You can't go places where you know you're going to get good Dana.

You have to go evenly to all places. So you can't like, you know, try to farm the places where it's known that you get good Dana, but still all the Zen monks in Kyoto knew where the good Dana was, even though you weren't allowed because the roots are set. So you have to follow a set route. But if on that particular day, your route takes you by one of the good Dana locations, well, that's good. Why is that good? Well, you don't keep that money.

Okay. That goes into a common pot. But the good thing about scoring with good Dana is that you're only allowed to collect to a certain amount. And if someone gives you a big amount, you're done with your Dana rounds. So what you do is you go find a bridge someplace where no one can see you. You go out in groups of three on these begging rounds. So the three people will like find some place out of sight. And you know what you do? You sleep.

Because you're always sleep deprived, right? So good Dana means you're going to get like an hour of sleep if you get score good. But you're not, like I say, you're not allowed to go seek that. But there was this one house where when you would go by it, clearly a foreigner lived there because it said Nikora in Kana on the front door. But a maid would come out and like give you like a big Dana thing.

Okay. And so all the monks knew Nikora. So I always thought it was a Russian man because of the name, you know, Nikolai, it's a common. So anyway, I get this letter that signed Nikola. And it says, this is when I'm back at Mount Koya, and it says, I'm the director of Friends World College East Asian campus, which is a Quaker International University. And I heard that you're an American and that you're at Mount Koya. Our students don't speak Japanese.

So would you be willing to show them around Mount Koya and give them a little lecture on Buddhism in English? Because it's international. So I thought, oh, this must be that Nikola. So I said, yeah, come on up. And I was, like I say, expecting a Russian man.

Instead, it was this German housewife with this really strong accent. And so it was like, okay. And I showed the students around. And she says, if you're ever in the city of Kyoto, come visit me.

Here's my address. So a few months go by. Sure enough, I have some business in Kyoto, which as you probably know, is the old capital of Japan.

And it's just a few hour drive from Mount Koya. So I go to her house and she says, oh, come up. For some reason, she decided to call me Stefan. Something told her that's my name.



So, Stefan, come on up. And so she says, you know why I wanted you to come visit me? And I said, no. And then she proceeded to tell me exactly where I was at with my meditation practice and what I needed to be doing. And it turns out that she was friends with all the great Zen masters in the city of Kyoto.

And it was like she had this incredible background. Of course, I couldn't see it. She just looked like an ordinary person. But she could see who I was. And the main thing that she said is, I mean, without talking to me at all, just watching me, it's like she said, yes, I can see that you're able to sort of be in a meditative state, which is pretty good.

But you have to learn how to serve people and you have to learn how to be comfortable around people. It's like, well, this is surprising that she could sort of know that. So I observed her and I had a role model.

I could see what it was. This is the result of a lifetime of practice. This is the result of having stayed on the ox while you're watching your friends being guillotined. This is the result of having stayed on the ox while Russian troops are raping you. This is the result of staying on the ox when you're being interrogated by the SS and you're 20 years old.

What's the result of having done that? Is, oh, just here and available to help people through their stuff. And I saw the entire spectrum of Japanese society walking across her, crossing her threshold over a period of a number of years. Everything from the highest to the lowest. From the great masters of Zen to Yakuza, which if you don't know it, well, I'm sure you do know what that is. It's bad news Japanese criminals, right? But she could relate to them. Left-wing terrorists, international terrorists, I couldn't believe it.

I mean, like criminal terrorists would come and she had something to give them. And everything in between. Just, okay, this is a person that can relate to everyone. That's comfortable around sinners and saints equally. That's a role model. And then later on, I lived in a Chinese monastery, the Chinese master, same thing. Exactly the same thing. And over and over again, I saw this pattern. This is where it ends up. You're basically in the marketplace.

Not in the sense of selling your wares, but in the sense of just available. After I had completed my hundred days of isolation, my best friend was a Tendai monk. So there's Shingon and there's Tendai. Those are the two schools that were dominant in Japan during the Heian period.

Heian is when Kyoto was the capital. Before Zen, before Pure Land and so forth, the two schools were Tendai and Shingon. And each was on a different mountain. Shingon is on Mount Koya and Tendai is on Mount Hiei.

Mount Hiei is right next to the city of Kyoto. So my best friend, Kendai-san, was a Tendai monk from Osaka and he was my age. So he said, now that you've completed the hundred days of training, and I thought I was hot stuff after a hundred days.

No Westerner had ever done that particular practice. So he said, now that you've done that, I think you can meet my teacher. So come to Mount Hiei, let's go meet my teacher.

So his teacher was one of the quote marathon monks of Mount Hiei. You can actually find this on the internet. I think they even have YouTubes of it. There's a documentary. A documentary. Is it on the internet? It's on YouTube.

It's on YouTube. I think it's called the Marathon Monks of Mount Hiei. But the Japanese don't call them marathon monks. That's a Western term.

The Japanese call them Dai-gyo-ma-ajari. Ajari is acharya. It means, it's from the Sanskrit, it means a teacher. It's the same root as acharn in Thailand. So acharya is a teacher, master. Dai-gyo-ma means someone who has completed the great practice.

And it is a great practice. Like I say, I thought I was hot stuff after a hundred days in isolation. This is 12 years in isolation. And during that 12 years you do a few things that you would not think any human being could do.

Like sit for nine days without food or water or sleep. A couple times actually. So I actually am sitting down having a meal with someone who's done that and just sort of shooting the breeze. And talking about practice of course, because that was very salient for me at the time. And he's telling me about the traditions of this 12 year practice on Mount Hiei.

So you wouldn't think a person could do it, but people do. And in addition to like the nine day sits, they do these hundred day walks up and down Mount Hiei. So they walk down the mountain into the city of Kyoto, chant mantras and prayers at every shrine and temple, major one in the city, then come back up the mountain. It's done in winter. That walk takes about 20 hours. And they do a hundred of those walks in a row. So that leaves four hours for everything else. Rest, eating, bathing. You wouldn't think a person, that's where the term marathon comes from. You wouldn't think you could survive that, but people do. But you know, my thing is I want to figure out how to work smart so that it's not a, for you folks, it's not a brute force algorithm. Okay. But you work smart so you can get similar effects without having to go through the brutality and intensity of the old school practice.

And it is my dream to figure out how to do that because the average person is not going to ever take on something like this. So in any event, when each day of this 12 years, they carry with them a tanto. Tanto is like a short samurai sword. And a rope. Now, it's a symbolism of one of the main deities called Fudo.

Fudo is F-U-D-O. You can look up on the internet if you're interested. Achalanata is his name in Sanskrit. And he's sort of ferocious looking and he has a rope in one hand and a sword in the other hand. So the rope stands for samadhi because you sort of bind attention in a concentrated way. And then the sword or the knife stands for what you think it stands for.

That's the wisdom. So it's like the shamatha and vipashyana, right? The rope is samadhi, it's concentrated, and then the wisdom is the sword that cuts through. So they carry the attributes of this bodhisattva, achala, in Sanskrit or fudo, F-U-D-O, in Japanese. But it also has another meaning besides symbolic of the practice. Maybe you can guess. If they fail, they have to commit suicide. Yes.

If they cannot complete even one day of the 12-year commitment, they take their own life, either by hanging or, you know, the knife. So, okay, that's, you know, maybe feeling a little weird right now, but in all honesty, that did not make me feel weird at all. I got it.

I got it. Once again, I'm not saying I expect anyone to practice that way at all, but I got it when he explained. Because I was still a kid, and so you still ask, I was just 25 years old, so you still ask embarrassing questions.

I even love people like that. So I asked him, would you have done it? Would you have actually killed yourself if you couldn't make one day of it? And he said, yeah. And he said, I'll tell you why. Because the only way that we've been able to do this for the last thousand years, and that's how long they've been doing it, on that mountain, the only reason we've been able to keep this up for thousand years, is everyone that does this has made that commitment. And so that, that resolve is what allows us to do this. And my sense of gratitude towards this practice is so great that I'm willing to take my own life in order to maintain this tradition, to make it possible for future generations to do this.

So yeah, it's extreme, and yeah, you don't have to, you know, have the Japanese, you know, suicide pilot, do or die mentality to get enlightened. But I got it. It did not weird me out at all. It just made sense. That's how grateful you are.

That's how important it is. So what did he do all day? I got to observe him. Same thing, just like all the other people. He's just there. And people from the village come and people from the city of Kyoto come, and they've got this problem and they've got that problem, and they know what he's been through. In the old days in Japan, they didn't have psychotherapists. People had problems.

Where did they go? They went to people like him. And he's got something to give. So one has these role models. One is indoctrinated into a certain philosophy of practice. One is miserable at the beginning a lot. So these are factors that lead to it being quite natural to see the, if you had to just say one thing that this practice is about, it's becoming the person that is approachable, is just there, and has something deep and important to give to a wide spectrum of human beings, in fact the whole spectrum of human beings. Then there's one other factor, and it's also very important. So it's sort of the flip side of failure.

The flip side of failure is success. So at some point you see the ox. It might happen suddenly, but it's probably going to just sort of sneak up on you as time goes on. You see the source, and when you see the source, your source, you see everyone's source. And when you finally are able to stay on the ox 24-7, just as before you took on the practice, you could not escape from fundamental alienation. Without this practice, you can't escape from fundamental alienation.

Everyone has it, unless something dramatic happens. Fundamental alienation is that rock-solid sense that there is a, that your identity ends with your skin, that there is a tangible barrier between inside and outside. Us versus them, I versus it. It's constantly present in all perceptions. And there's just no escape from it, and everybody assumes it's the nature of reality. But after you've ridden on that ox for a while, you cannot escape the opposite of that. You can't escape it.

It's in your face 24-7. Everything you see or hear or touch is being loved into existence right in front of you by this activity of the source, this formless womb. And that's the first thing you perceive. Each time you turn your head or reach out, touch the world, the first thing you perceive before anything else, amor primero, is this cosmic love. And it's just natural to want to be of service to this larger identity. It's just natural. And it's very, very empowering and comforting because just like anyone else, you judge.

You like this one, you don't like that one. You find this person who's empowered to be wonderful or this person who's empowered to be scary and horrible, just like anybody else. But that comes a moment later. That's a moment later.

And therefore, it's just in a very different context. So therein lies the secret to being of use to this world. Love deeply. That's what I mean by love deeply. Act effectively.

# APPRECIATE, TRANSCEND & IMPROVE: OUR 3 HUMAN JOBS ~

## Shinzen Young

We can think of the human condition as having three jobs imposed upon us.

It's like, what should we do? What do we need to do in this human life? Well, I would say three things. One thing is to learn how to appreciate, I'll just use an A to abbreviate that, appreciate sensorially the world of form. Actually, there's two worlds of form.

There's the form of the outside, what we see physically, what we hear physically, and the physical sensations in the body. That is the apparent objective world. And then we react to that objective world. Also, we see, hear, feel. We have mental images, which is our visual thinking.

We have mental talk, which is auditory thinking. And then we have emotional type body sensations that are sort of, typically have a little different quality from the simply physical type sensations. And that inner system is form. It has its sensory, and its visual, auditory, and somatic. So when you see a flower, for example, there's see out of the flower, and typically there's see in, hear in, feel in reactions to the flower. There's thoughts and emotions. Those thoughts and emotions may be on the surface of awareness, so that they're fully conscious, or they may be subliminal. They may be below the threshold of awareness, perhaps not immediately observable at the beginning of your practice, but as your detection skills grow, you will start to be able to detect these subtle levels of subjective activation. So let's say that you wanted to have a truly satisfying experience of looking at a flower.

Well, actually, there'd be sort of two ways you could go about doing that. One is you could so fully focus on the outer form, the see out, that it expands, and the inner reactive system, the see in, hear in, feel in, contracts. And so there is just an experience of flowering without a sense of an eye observing. So that would be a kind of merging or non-dual experience with the flower that would come about through out expanding while in contracts, into an all rest or even an all gone situation.

That would be one way of going about having a really satisfying experience of seeing a flower or seeing anything. How about hearing? Same thing. How about having physical contact with something, including hunger or sleepiness? Okay. How could we have a satisfying experience of other outs? Well, one way is there's just the out and little or no in form. Even great physical pain, if there's no reactive see in, hear in, feel in, if it's just feel out, there's really going to, it could be anybody's body that's going through that and therefore it's everybody's body.

And therefore there's an okayness within that. So that would be one way to experience in a very satisfying way what we see here and what physically impacts us. See here on the outside, feel physically. However, another way to have a satisfying experience is that the outer and the inner activate at the same time. But the outer is experienced with a lot of mindfulness and also the inner is experienced with a lot of mindfulness. So the entire sensory experience is mindful.

We are deeply appreciating not only the form of out but the self in this case. And we can also have experiences, you have probably noticed that the inner system doesn't just react to the outer. It also sometimes goes proactive. It spins memory, plan, fantasy, etc.

Have you noticed that? So what about that? Well, guess what? The outer tends to actually contract. You don't notice it, but the sights and the sounds, even your physical body, the physicality of the body can sort of go into the background and the memory, plan, fantasy, sort of self, the subject of self gets very, very large. That's fine as long as it's experienced with a lot of concentration, clarity and equanimity. You're approaching a complete experience of the arising of thought and emotion. You're in the world of memory, plan, fantasy, but you're not lost in that world. You are in the absolute present as past, future, fantasy are rising. You are sensorially in the present. So these are a number of different ways in which we can appreciate the self in the world.

Every one of these involves three core skills. Concentration power, sensory clarity and equanimity. So one of our jobs would be to sensorially appreciate the self and the world just as it is. Sometimes people have a lot of difficulty appreciating the self just as it is.

I have a lot of difficulty with that. I tormented myself for probably the first 15 years of my practice somehow trying to suppress or get rid of the inner activations. I thought that's the enemy of meditation. Thought and emotion is the enemy of meditation.

That's the self. And so I got to get rid of it and I was fighting with it and suppressing it and trying to get everything cooled out and flatlined, etc. It took me a long time to get over that and to realize that the goal is not to get rid of that stuff. The goal is to get rid of the unconsciousness, coagulation and scatteredness associated with that stuff. That's the enemy. So we train away the unmindfulness and then you can have the full mantle, the complete eruption of thought and emotion.

The volcano of in. And it's not a problem at all. It just tastes like catharsis, cleansing. So it turns out that to appreciate the self and the world sensorially as they arise in the present, key attentional skills for this task are the mindfulness skills. So I look upon this as one of our jobs.

What's another job? T. This stands for transcend. Transcend is Latin for go beyond.

Appreciate form? Go beyond form. Well, what's that? Well, we could philosophically speculate, but that's not what we're interested in here. We're interested in actual experiences. So can I describe in words what is beyond form? Certainly. Will those words necessarily map on to every human being's experience? Well, in a sense, yes. Will those words map on to every human being's conscious experience? No. But as you continue to practice, the words register.

They line up, they register with your actual experience. So we'll be talking more about this. If I had to put it into words, well, I could put it into words a lot of ways, but let's just briefly say this. That which is beyond form is the source of form. It's also the ultimate destination of form.

So moment by moment, how does our sensory experience work when viewed under the microscope of enormous mindfulness? It works like this. There's nothing. But nothing is inherently stable because it's not – this isn't a bleak nothing. This is the nothing that comes about when all the yeses and all the noes needed to mold this or any conceivable world mutually cancel out.

So it's inherently unstable and therefore breaks apart spontaneously. So there's this special, rich nothing that all the mystical traditions of the world talk about, every single one of them. And when I say mystical, I mean contemplative. I don't mean mystical in the sense of like, you know, new agey kind of power realm stuff. I mean the classical contemplative-based spiritualities that we find all around the world in every age and in every culture. Some people have called it the perennial philosophy because it just comes back over and over again. The cultures are very different.

Often the philosophies and theologies are very different. But amazingly, all sufficiently attained contemplatives talk about the source as a kind of special nothingness. Nihil per excellentiam. A nothing par excellence as opposed to nihil privativum, nothing that's just an absence. These Latin words, you might guess, are part of the Catholic tradition, which is part of Christianity. In the Eastern Orthodox, they talked about apathetic contemplation. Okay, it's like nothing, but it's a special nothing. Meister Eckhart talked about nichts.

San Juan de la Cruz talked about na'ala. In Jewish contemplation, ayin, which means nothing, ein or ayin, non-existence. That's the word that's used.

Or sometimes there's another Hebrew word. I'm forgetting. It'll come to me. Okay, how about Taoism? In Taoism, they talk about sometimes they talk about xu, xu, it's pronounced xu, first tongue, which means vacuous. But more frequently, they talk about wuji, this is really a great word, wuji, whoops, bad spelling, wuji, j-i, both rising tones. If you write it in Chinese, it means depolarized.

This literally means a pole, like literally means a pole, a ridge pole in a house. This is a, and then wu is without, so a depolarized state. And then how does creation come about? When the depolarized state polarizes, then you have tai chi, the great polarization. Okay, and do you know how the great polarization, I wrote that really grumpy hands. You all know the tai chi tu, the diagram of the great polarization, right? We in the West call it the yin yang, which is what it portrays, because that's the great polarization, expansion and contraction pulling apart, interacting, each containing the other somewhat, even though they're polarized, there's still some hint of the original neutralization. Okay, what is the, so we covered Christianity, we covered Taoism, oh boy, what else, we covered Judaism, Islam, Fana, F-A-N-A.

Now I'd really be impressed if I could remember how to write an Arabic, but I can't. Okay, fana means annihilation. Into the source. Okay, what else do we have around the world? Well, Buddhism, shunyata. And nirodha, which means the same as fana, cessation. And Hinduism, yoga, for example, nirodha, same word, cessation.

The yoga sutras begin, yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of consciousness. So all over the world there's this sort of special nothing, very special kind of nothing, breaks apart. So now there's two things. There's space effortlessly spreading and space effortlessly collapsing simultaneously. It's two things, it's not the one nothing, but it's pretty close to the one nothing. And in between the two, so there's the one nothing, which is obviously beyond form because it, there's no time or space inside of it, so how could you have any form? Then it breaks apart and creates a cleft. That cleft is a volume of time space, a volume of space time.

And that space time experiences the antipodal forces of expansion and contraction and therefore that space time vibrates into, see, hear, feel. The one half creating the impression of a self inside, the impression of a self inside, the other half creating the impression of a surrounding scene. However, if you are able to still have one foot in expansion and the other foot firmly planted in contraction while the self and scene are arising, then you will not have completely lost your connection to the source. So there's nothing to get in the way of the two sides coming back together, digesting that volume of time space self world back to the primordial state.

And then the cycle starts again over and over and over and over. So the extent to which you are able to be in contact with zero or be in contact with the two sides of zero, even in contact with the two, even when the ten billion are arising in between the two, to the extent that you are able to be in contact with the one nothing or the two doings, to that extent you are abiding beyond form. Even though you may be walking through form, talking to form, driving your car in form, but not completely cutting the umbilical cord to your source. So that would be living nirvana, so to speak.

What I'm talking about is something that happens on the cushion but ultimately something we want to be able to have happening as we're just bopping around, taking care of business. So a person that's able to do that can be called a deeply enlightened person. Okay, so appreciate form, that means appreciate sensorially self and world, get over the self and get over the world. So there's only one verb left that's really appropriate to apply to self and world or form.

Appreciate, transcend, and the other verb is improve. You may have heard the expression, first there is a mountain, then there is no mountain, then there is a mountain. How many people have heard that? Sounds cool. What the hell does it mean? Well, when we begin our practice, we can be working on this. We'll talk about this in some detail. We can be working on this. We may get some sort of hints of this but we're probably going to be mostly working on this because as we'll see, as time goes on, see how our time is, there's complementary relationships between all these things.

But when you start out, you might be doing some loving kindness practice but mostly you're just observing stuff and if you're doing mindfulness practice and what's the stuff you're observing is just probably more or less ordinary stuff. So there's a mountain. It seems like there's the external world exists. It seems like there's something called a self inside that's in relationship to that. So there's a mountain.

Then you start to get some hints of this. So there's no mountain, at least occasionally. Actually quite frequently. Actually everyone experiences this, just not consciously. That's why I said, well, if you sort of live this way, you're deeply enlightened. But the funny thing is anyone that does live that way, they don't think of themselves as enlightened because they see that everyone experiences zero.

But just not consciously. A dog's barking. And you listen to it, you listen to it and then the dog stops barking. The moment when the dog stops barking, you return to the source. Just, or the dog returned to the source.

Just briefly, for a fraction of a second. But first of all, people don't pay attention to it. And secondly, even if they did pay attention to it, it would seem like a trivial pursuit.

So who cares? Big whoop. The dog stopped barking. But as time goes on, one's palate changes. One develops a taste for certain things. One develops the taste for moments of vanishing. You've probably heard me say this, each time you notice anything, however banal, coming to an end, each time you consciously notice that you've made a deposit in your Zen bank account. But Zen accountancy has a very strange mathematics.

It's a non-standard mathematics. First of all, the account always equals zero. But there are different sizes of zero. Now that's non-standard mathematics.

However, there's a couple people in this room with actual advanced mathematical training. And for those of you that are in that category, I will point out that the set theoretic construction of the integers actually does sort of imply an infinity of zeros. Because every pair of positive and negative integers taken together is an ordered pair. That's how you create the notion of polarity by an axiom in set theory called ordered pairs.

Now I better stop, right? I'm starting to get off on a riff here. But anyway, there are an infinity of ordered pairs. They're the same thing, 5, 5, 8, 8, 10, 10, okay? Except one of them is negative and one of them is positive. The set of all mutually cancelling numbers, integers, set of all such things is the number zero. So the number zero, the bigger the polarity, the bigger the gap. The bigger the deal that you can stay with it, stay with it, stay with it...

GONE! That's gonna be a bigger zero in your bank account. So, what were we talking about? Sorry, I stayed with it too long. The mountain. First there is a mountain, then there is no mountain, occasionally. Then there is no mountain whenever you want, at which point

you realize everyone experiences no mountain, they just don't notice it. So you can't think of yourself as enlightened because you can't think of being enlightened as being so different from anybody else.

Because you see the enlightenment in everyone, whether they see it or not. So there's no mountain. Then there is a mountain. A freaking big mountain. For the rest of your freaking life, there's a mountain. And that mountain is becoming an ordinary, admirable person by the canons of the culture that you live in.

That is a huge mountain. Now you might think, if you experience nothingness on a consistent basis, then it's automatic that you're going to improve the self in the world. Well, there's going to be, it's going to certainly make that job easier, a lot easier. And it's certainly going to give you a proclivity to want to improve yourself and improve the world. Yes. But does it guarantee it? No, it just gives you the proclivity and makes it easier.

At least in my experience. Usually about 10-15 years after some sort of enlightenment, you realize how unenlightened you really are. And then you just keep working. So let's see, improve self and world. So how can we think of improving ourselves? Now mind you, you don't have to have this in order to start doing this. You'll notice that this is the first day of the retreat and we're working on this. We're noting things and we're doing metta, loving kindness.

So improve the self. I like to think of this with an acronym ABC. The ABCs of being an admirable person. Affect, just a fancy word for emotion. Behavior, that's what we do in the world. Our relationship with people, substances. Cognition, what are our go-to thought patterns? Are they adaptive, rational? Or are they not that? So I mentioned that CC&E, the basic skills of mindfulness, are obviously important for appreciating the world. Your goal is to appreciate the food in front of you. Do you need concentration for that? Well, it would be very helpful if you could focus on the sensory experience of eating, if you want to appreciate the eating. Do you need sensory clarity? Well, it would be very useful if you could distinguish different flavors and textures. Maybe notice your emotional reactions to it.

What part is image, what part is the emotional body, etc. Do you need equanimity? Well, when pleasure arises, if you hold on for a moment, you won't be able to experience the next wave of pleasure. You'll experience a little frustration. If you have things that are uncomfortable come up, tastes that you don't like or something like that, if you have equanimity, they'll cause you less bother. So to have an experience of appreciating your meal or appreciating another person or listening to music or whatever, clearly our core skills are useful. You have to look at the infrastructure of sensory experience with a very stable, high resolution, sort of microscopic attention in order to see the fine level of how consciousness works.

The zero, the one nothing, the two doings, the one nothing, the two doings, the cycle. You need a lot of CCME to detect this and to hold your awareness on it. Same skills are used here. So how do we have our go-to emotions be more in the love, joy areas? Well, habits. So habits are things, how a habit is developed is we do it over and over again. It becomes a habit. The Sanskrit word for habit is saṁkāra.

The Pali pronunciation is saṁkāra. So habits can be positive or negative. We in a sense need to be free from all of them but we want the positives to be influencing our life but we need to actually break our identification with both positive and negative.

That happens here. But in terms of what we want to be manifesting in the world, we definitely want positive habits. So you can intentionally create a momentum of positive emotion through practices like loving kindness and a whole bunch of related type things. So that's the affect. Cognition is sort of similar.



Okay, now let's organize it a little differently. What about behavior? Well, we can use nurture positive to help us work with behavior also. We could visualize a situation where we've changed a behavior and then we could have mental talk about how great that would be and then we can have pleasant emotion in the body and we can sort of use that apparatus to try to foster positive behaviors. And in the same way we can use the same apparatus and by apparatus I mean what I call nurture positive where you choose a theme, you choose one or a combination of the inner activities and then you create that theme there and you maintain that theme there so that it becomes more and more habitual. And then you can do the same with cognition. Let's say that you have a fear of flying, for example. So then you can make the mental mantra flying is safe, let's say, and you can have pleasant emotion in the body and then of course when the gainsay, naysay comes up, no it's not safe, I'm going to get killed for sure, blah blah blah, then you just sort of let that have equanimity with that, you don't fight with it, you selectively attend to the positive, and that could with time cause you to more habitually go to, well, the reality. The reality is, I mean look at the statistics.

The chances of being killed in an air crash are I think much more than a billion to one, considerably more than that, or less than that I should say. So we can use nurture positive apparatus which both develops our core skills and also represents an application of those core skills to a certain job or goal. So we can use the nurture positive apparatus for this kind of thing, for improving ourself. Is that enough? No, that might not be enough. We might need other things. We might need, for the behavior thing, we might need an objective accountability and support structure like a 12 step program, for example.

There might be other things that we would need. So I'm not saying that this is all, but it certainly can help. Also, when negative emotions come up, negative urges come up, negative thoughts come up, in addition to replacing them with their opposites, which is technically called antidote meditation, and was discovered by the Buddhists a long, long time ago, 2500 years ago. They talked about antidotes, but they also discovered deconstruction.

You can use the focus in technique, divide and conquer, break negative emotions or negative urges or maladaptive thought patterns, break them up into their pieces and then break those into smaller pieces until you experience the entire thing as just vibrating space, meaning that you can deconstruct the opposites of these back into this. Okay, so that's improving the self. How do we improve the world? Well, we can do material service.

This is how we normally think of improving the world, material seva. So what does that mean? A lot of things. It can mean staffing a soup kitchen, you know, archetypally, or it can mean volunteering, it can mean philanthropy towards those kinds of causes, it can mean working for social change, however you conceive of that social change should occur.

People have different ideas about that. It can also be material service, the most common form of material service that most people are going to do is raising a family. That's a huge service, creating new humans and helping them to be able to have a good life. That's a huge improvement of the world.

So there's that, which is sort of obvious. Then there is what's near and dear to my heart, which is you can teach mindfulness. That definitely improves the world, allows people to do all this stuff and then some of them will teach mindfulness.

You see how it could spread, right? And or you support people that teach mindfulness or related things. That's the dana. So you give us dana that allow us to be full-time specialist mindfulness teachers. So you can teach mindfulness yourself and you can support people that teach mindfulness. That makes the world a better place for sure. And then there's the obvious material services that people do. So I call this improve the self and the world.

## Be The Master of Every Situation ~ SHINZEN YOUNG

So, we've been talking about this happiness independent of conditions.

We've talked about it from a lot of points of view. When I first went into the Zen temple, after I'd been at Mount Koya for a while, I decided that I wanted to experience training in the Zen tradition. I think I'd been at Mount Koya for two years and I'd completed what's called kegyo, which is the basic training in Shingon.

That's a hundred days in isolation. So I went to the abbot of the temple and I said, can I go away for the summer, for four months to Kyoto to do the summer training at one of the Zen temples in Kyoto. He was not very happy about that actually, but what he said is, well first of all he scared me. He said he himself at once considered going to do the Zen training, but when he looked into it, the Zen people said, because you belong to another school, you're going to probably get beat up even more than us. He told me this story, right? So it's like, oh, okay, well I still think I'd like to try it. And then he said, okay, but just all I ask is don't come back here with a half-baked knowledge of Zen and criticize Shingon. Don't come back with a half-baked knowledge of Zen and criticize your school, the Shingon school. So I said, okay, I won't do that. And he gave me permission. So I was like really scared because it's like you're going to get beat up more than even those guys, okay, and they get beat up.

Now beat up could mean physical, but it could also be emotional. So the way I got into the temple, it was Shokoku-ji. Actually Gary Snyder had practiced at Shokoku-ji at an earlier period.

He even writes about it. You can find his writings about the Rohatsu Sesshin at Shokoku-ji temple. Shokoku-ji is one of the seven Rinzai Zen training centers in the city of Kyoto, which is the old capital of Japan.

So anyway, everything in Japan is done through Shotaijo. That means a letter of introduction. So I got Abe Masao, who helped a lot of foreigners get involved in practice in the early days, was a friend of mine. And so I asked him to sort of find a Zen temple that would take me and sort of set it up for me and he did. So there's different things you have to do and I've told you some of the stories about little tests that they put you through before they let you in. But then once they let you in, they really let you in.

It was pretty cool. So one of the things that you need to be a Zen monk is you need a copy of the Rinzai Roku. So the Rinzai Roku is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese book Linji Lu.

And Lu means a record. Linji was a famous monk. He is the monk that started the Rinzai school. Linji is the Mandarin pronunciation of Rinzai. So these are the sayings of Master Linji, who lived in the Tang Dynasty.

So what happens is each morning, the master of the Zen temple, the Roshi, gets up and gives a taisho based on this text. And he reads it in Sino-Japanese, what's called Kanbun. He reads it in Sino-Japanese, but it's absolutely impossible to understand by just listening.

I mean, simply impossible. Even if you were a Buddhist scholar, you can't understand just by listening because there's so many words that sound the same in Sino-Japanese.

Sino-Japanese has to be seen to be comprehended. So every Zen monk has a copy in Chinese of the Rinzai Roku, the sayings of Master Rinzai, so that when the Roshi is reading in this weird pronunciation, you can see with the kanji, you can see the characters and you can follow what he's saying. So I needed a copy of the Rinzai Roku. So Abe Sensei gave me a copy of it. It's really cool because it's not a modern printed book. It's the old style of woodblock printing, you know, and the old style bindings, the way they used to make

books hundreds of years ago in that part of the world.

So it's like, you know, it's like really, really old fashioned, right? So he gave me a copy of the Rinzaï Roku. And so I remember I'm there and it's like the first night and I'm going to, you know, the next day I'm going to start this little series of tests. And I knew that if I passed all those tests and got in, you know, I was just going to be bossed around for six months. I was going to be like someone's slave.

So it was like really, really scary. And so I was sort of going through my stuff and organizing my stuff and I saw the Rinzaï Roku, the Lin Chi Luke book that Abe Sensei had provided for me so I could follow the Teishos. And so I opened it up just to look at it and he had calligraphed on the cover, on the first page of it, you know, before you get into the text, like just the title page, he had calligraphed in his own writing with a brush four kanji. And those are the kanji.

And it just jumped, like jumped off the page and into my heart. It's a phrase from one of the Zen masters. And what it means is, be the master of every situation. Now that's the literal meaning of these four characters, be the master of every situation. Zuishoni shu tonaru.

Suichu zuochu in Mandarin Chinese. And I knew, because I'd done enough study and practice, I knew what he was trying to convey. You might think that he was saying, you can tough it out.

You know, don't let them get you down. One might think that that's what that meant, but I knew for sure that that's not at all what he was reminding me of. Because I'd seen the phrase before in my studies, and I knew in the Zen tradition what it referred to, and it referred to something very specific. When the Zen people talk about being the master, so the master is the person that owns the house. They talk about host and guest. So this also means host. So when you contrast host and guest, I said master, but it also means host, the person that owns the house.

So when they say, be the host in every situation, or be the master in every situation, this is an idiom that refers to a very specific experience. Yesterday, I talked about a sense of compassion arising from wisdom. Because wisdom allows you to experience each person, each thing really, as being molded moment by moment before your very eyes, before your sight, sound, touch. Compassion and contraction are loving your world into existence.

This is not a theory, it's not a belief, it's not even a feel-good emotion. It's in your touch, sight, sound circuits. So you can't escape it, even if you would want to, and who would want to. So you experience your inner world, your inner sea, your feel, is this sort of bubble that's percolating up from the still point of the turning world. And simultaneously, this other bubble is percolating up, that is the flower or the person or the tree, what have you.

It's like the two bubbles, it's like God's thought balloons or something, that are sort of like expanding and then collapse down and then expand out again. Now experiencing yourself and the so-called other simultaneously born from the same source leads to a sense of connection, that leads to an effortless compassion. The quality of mercy is not strained, it falleth like the gentle rain from heaven.

That's Shakespeare. But he's talking about a spontaneity, a just happeningness in one's caring. So that's what happens when you experience the outer world and the inner world, both arising simultaneously, and you experience them with the wisdom mind. So there's an it and there's a me. But they're coming and they're both arising, I'm reacting, there's a self over here that's experiencing an it over there, but I'm experiencing both of them as sharing the same source. So that leads to a compassion, an I-Thou relationship as opposed to an I-It relationship. Or there's another thing that can happen.

It's similar but even more challenging. What happens if instead of these two bubbles simultaneously arising from the same source, what happens if there's only the out, no inner reactivity at all? What happens then? Well the identity moves out and literally lives inside what was formerly other. For however long there's contact in touch, sight, sound. That's what they mean by being the master. You're the host inside each of these houses that normally you think of as other. It's like you're now inside that person looking out from their eyes, or if it's a flower, they don't have eyes, but you're inside the activity called flower because you're doing the activity called flower and you're not for a brief moment, 30 seconds or shorter or longer, the activity called shinzen has completely flatlined. The only activity that there is is the activity called flower or the activity called Peter, Paul, Mary, whoever you're interacting with. There's just that. So it seems like you're in each place, each place, each place, you're the lord of that house, you're the master of that place. So what he was really telling me is, in just four kanji, he was saying, okay shinzen, I know you're scared shitless and you're going to encounter some harsh shit here, but no matter how seemingly mean or scary or in your face, the so-called other may be, you know what your job is and if you remember that job, you're going to be just fine.

## Being 10 TIMES Happier ~ SHINZEN YOUNG

An acquaintance of mine wrote a book called 10% Happier, Dan Harris. He's on the nightline, right? And I think ABC Good Morning America or something like that, right? He's like a talk hoe, but he's one of us. He famously had a panic attack on camera at some point in his career, which you can actually see on YouTube. It's like, we'll be there forever, right? And that was his wake up call that he had to, something was radically wrong with his life.

And a major part of his recovery was to take on this practice, mindfulness practice. But because he's in the position of being a prominent television personality, it's sort of cool for us. So he wrote this book called 10% Happier. And he's got a whole program that goes with it. Actually, he's partnering up with one of my facilitators, Jeff Warren from Canada. They're on tour now in the US, sort of bringing the message of mindfulness.

So cool that we're that mainstream at this point. Anyway, the title of that book got me thinking about my own life. So, you know, 10% Happier, and I started to calculate in my mind, did the like a thought experiment.

Okay, at my current age, what would the picture be if I hadn't made that decision at the age of 25 to, by hook or crook, meditate every day of my life? What if I hadn't done that? What if I just been one of the million other things that I could have been as a non-meditator? So where would I be, given who I was at 25? Extrapolating, where would I be? And then where I know myself to be as the result of that decision. And objectively, I just, I had to say, it's not 10% happier, it's 10 times happier. I mean, objectively, easily 10 times happier. Or put the other way, I would be one-tenth as happy, which actually would be like pretty miserable. So anyway, I encourage you in that regard.

## Being a Generalized Mystic ~ Shinzen Young

How did you get into Buddhism? Okay, so, let's see here. How I went from being a monk to a non-Buddhist, and how I worked through my various issues on the cushion. Who gave me this question? Don't be embarrassed.

At which issues were you thinking of? That could be several Dharma talks. I think you were a pig. A pig one. Well, now that's interesting.

We have these teachers' meetings, where the Western Buddhist teachers, meaning the people teaching Buddhism in the West, nothing to do with your ethnic origin, the so-called Western Buddhist teachers, we have these periodic meetings. Next one is going to be in two years, in 2015. And in the past it's been 200, 250, it's probably going to be twice as big next time. It's awesome.

These are all full-time teachers. So, we had this meeting, as we do from time to time, and they took us through an interesting process called crossing the line. Anybody here know what this is? I see only like two or three people.

That's interesting. I had never seen it. I don't know what is its origin.

I mean, I don't know. What would you even call it? It's an empathy builder? So, what they do is, you've got this huge group of people, and they put a line in the middle of the room. And then everybody is on one side of the room. And then they call out different ways that people could be characterized.

In fact, the whole range of things. Now, this is, I should say, done with this huge confidentiality agreement thing. Everybody knows that nothing is going to be revealed.

It's like, never to leave this room. And then people are safe to reveal who they really are within that group, assuming they feel they're safe enough to do that. And people start doing that. And so it's everything. It's how you think of yourself ethnically. It's how you think about yourself sexually. It's... you name it. Have you ever been arrested? I was one of the few that crossed the line.

There weren't many of the Buddhist teachers that had actually been arrested. I thought that was sort of cool. Let's see. Well, you know, are you of Jewish origin? Well, I'm sarcastic. And me, Jack, and Joseph all ended up, of course, we just crossed at the same place, so we all said, ah, I'll just conquer Jewish teachers at this point.

So anyway. But it was also things like, who believes in reincarnation? Well, not everyone crossed the line. Who considers themselves a Buddhist? Well, the great majority crossed the line. But I didn't. And I looked around and I saw a couple of other people. You can probably guess who they were, okay? I'm not like, no way am I going to reveal their names.

But if you know anything about who writes books about what, you won't have too much difficulty figuring out who was left back there with me. Because I couldn't really say that I'm religiously a Buddhist or identify myself that way. Then how would I identify myself? Well, actually, we went through it yesterday. I'm a generalized mystic. With a scientific mentality. However, absolutely, and hands down, the biggest influence on me is from the Buddhist tradition.

There's no doubt about that. Why? Because I look upon the historical Buddha as the first and greatest mystic to attempt to have something like a scientific mentality. To sort of say that, hey, mysticism doesn't have to be covered in mist.

That it can be logic and evidence-based. I mean, he obviously wouldn't use those words. I don't make puns in English, okay? But you get the general idea. He was scientist-like. And it was not an add-on, it was core to what he did. So to me, that's the model. However, a Buddhist is someone that follows the Buddhist religion, which has all sorts of credos and all sorts of customs. And I wouldn't really put myself in that category. I can think of at least three things that are pretty prevalent in Buddhism that to me do not seem to be evidence-based. And I've talked about that on occasion and so forth, so don't need to belabor that. But I would say, you know, I am certainly profoundly influenced. More than any human on this planet, I'm influenced by the historical Buddha.

And I just think that it's the job of us to build on what he discovered. So, anyway, that's... But I wouldn't say I'm a non-Buddhist, okay? I would just not say I'm a Buddhist. I would say that... Well, there was once a Sufi master who said, I'm in agreement with 100 conflicting theologians. I agree with every one of these 100 conflicting schools of Islamic interpretation. So, I think that's how I would characterize myself. I am comfortable in anybody's church.

I mean, really. Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist. It doesn't make any difference. It all seems the same to me. I don't see the surface, I see the depths. So, anyway, there's that.

## Being Confused is Good ~ Shinzen Young

Are you fixated in confusion? There's nothing wrong with being confused. In fact, being confused is really good. Coagulating when you're confused, not good. The goal is not to avoid confusion, doubt, disorientation. The goal is not to avoid don't know. The goal is to avoid the habitual coagulation around don't know. Uncoagulated don't know is called spontaneity when it comes out of your body and wisdom when it turns in your mind. I repeat, uncoagulated don't know is dynamic spontaneity when it comes out of your body and wisdom when it turns in your mind.



## Being In Ceremony ~ Stephanie Nash

I'm going to do a really non-Dharma teacher thing right now. I want a video of my view of all of you. So just wave.

This is the first female Dharma talk. Sorry, that was a little geek moment there. Okay, so I would like to invite everyone right now to imagine that today is your birthday.

You can do that. Alex's birthday was on Friday. Does anyone else have a birthday that's actually happening while we're here? No? So just imagine that today is your birthday. How would that change things? Would you feel different about what goes on if today was your birthday? How do you look at the day when it's your birthday? You think about it a little differently, right? It's a different kind of focus. It's a special day.

I'm going to talk about that kind of focus. I grew up in a tiny little town in Ohio, like 4,000 people, and our house was in the woods. And I would go out, I loved to get away from what was going on in the house, I went out into the woods. That was my refuge with my dog. I'm a dog person.

And on my birthday, when I was somewhere between 10 and 13, I can't remember anymore. And by the way, we have no speaker system, so I'm projecting. So if you can't hear me at any moment, just do this, and I won't assume you're saying it's good. Can you hear me okay now? I don't know if I'm going to be able to look at you the whole time.

All right. It is my birthday. It is, it's your birthday. So just imagine today's your birthday, and I'm going to tell a story about birthdays and that feeling you get on your birthday. So when I was somewhere between 10 and 13, it was my birthday, and what was going on in our house was it was a special day that I especially wanted to not be in the house for that day. So for my birthday, I wanted to go in the woods and get lost. Now in a small town, when you grow up, everyone knows everyone, and you know every inch of the town. So the idea of going somewhere in the woods, and we had like, there was a couple acres of woods, and there were some woods over by a farm I'd never been over to by myself at that age. And the idea of being someplace where you didn't know where you were was beyond my imagination.

So on my birthday for this time, I went out with my dog, who was also thrilled to be out of the house, and we went in the woods, and I deliberately, and if you hike, you know to keep track of where you are, you always look back so you know what the view will be going back. I didn't. I looked down, and I was twisting and turning because I wanted to get lost. And I went all like this all the way, and I finally got over to a part of the woods that I hadn't been before, and it was starting to get very exciting.

And I finally got to a place in the woods, and I stopped, and I looked in all directions, and I had no idea where I was or what way to go. There was a little moment of fear, but it was thrilling. It was this, and everything stopped for a second. I can't tell you what that was, because I was only 10 or 11 or 12, but I just kind of basked in that moment of not knowing where I was. And then I just picked a direction to go. My dog was kind of happily beside me, and in about less than five minutes, I knew where I was, and I went home. Fifteen years later or so in my late 20s, I'm in New York City trying to be an actress, which means I had no money, and it was my birthday, and I wanted to get lost in the woods.

If you've ever been to Manhattan, there's Central Park, and it's a lovely park, and I know every square inch of it, and I know the one place you can stand in the park and not know, not see any building, but you're still not lost in the woods. So I didn't have any money. I had no way to get out of town, and New Yorkers don't have cars, so I called everyone I knew to see if they knew some place I could go where I could get lost in the woods. And my little

brother had just graduated from Georgia Tech, and he had a friend whose dad who had a cabin north of Jasper, Georgia, which is north of Atlanta, and they were going to be gone for this 10-day period, and I could go down there for free if I could get myself down there.

And so I was so excited, and I got myself down to Jasper, Georgia, and it's this little town where everybody talks like that and says, Praise Jesus all the time, but they're happy, and so I just saw these beaming beautiful people, and I'm going to get lost in the woods, and I just praised Jesus with all of them because why not? I was happy to be there. And I finally got to my cabin in the woods, and there was orange shag carpeting. There was a fireplace, and everything else was woods, and there was a little lake there. It was away from everything else. There was nothing else anywhere near it, and the lake didn't have a path around it, but that's where I was going to get lost. So I would go around the lake every day, and there was no path, so I'm climbing over things, and it wasn't like my woods. There was more brush and stuff, so I'm scraping and getting over, and at one point, I'm hanging from this tree over a ravine that went down about as far down as that is high, and I was hanging there for a minute, and I thought, You know, if I fall, no one will ever find me. No one knows I'm here.

No one on the planet knows I'm here. It was very exciting, and I would make it around the lake and back. It took me about three or four hours because, again, there was no path, and I'm scraped and dirty and happy, and I get back, and I'm in the house, and I brought cassettes of James Taylor, which tells you how long ago this was, and I had cassettes of Steve Martin, Let's Get Small, but I just wasn't in the mood for that, and so I played James Taylor, and I lit a fire and listened to James Taylor all night, and I did the same thing the second day, and the third day, I just couldn't listen to any more James Taylor, and so I went around the lake again, and I came back, and it's silent, and this is the first moment it occurs to me that never in my life have I been alone.

I have lived with someone all of my life up until this point. In New York City, I don't know if you've ever lived in New York City, but if you've seen the movie The Matrix, and when Keanu Reeves' character wakes up, and he's in that thing, and he sees, that's New York City. Whoever did that obviously was a New Yorker. Coming from the woods in New York City, even if you're alone in a room, there's someone above you, there's an apartment above you, an apartment below you, there's someone to that side, someone to that side, you are stacked upon stacked upon stacked upon stacked upon stacked people, and you can't walk out without a human being somewhere. I'd always lived with someone. I had never, and we had lived in a house in the woods, but there was always someone else in the house. I had never been totally alone before, and it hit me this third day with no James Taylor, and there's no TV, and there's no radio, and I'm alone in these, and so it's just quiet. And so I came back from my hike in the woods, and I built my fire, and I sat there, and then suddenly I started to get this pain in my chest, and it got worse and worse, and I realized I was feeling this intense loneliness that I don't think I'd ever felt before, and it was this pressure, it was this ache, and it just got worse and worse, and I thought I had just never felt anything like this before, and then I started to cry, but then I thought, well, that's stupid, why are you crying? Lonely don't, you know, I like talked my, I judged myself out of crying, but crying still happened, and then if you've ever seen The Wizard of Oz, I use that analogy for everything, but this time I'll use it when the house spins, and everything's going around the cyclone, and you see all the people going around as she's spinning in the house before she lands, and everything, it's like I saw flashes of all these things from my life, none of which were good, there was nobody I was longing for to be with, it was every fight, every horrible thing, all the bad things that had happened to me, and they were all flashing to me as I had this aching, oh my God, the loneliness, it hurts so bad, and I just ache so bad, and I didn't think you could ache that bad, and it just, it just got more and more, and yes, peacocks, it was like that, it was like a dying cat, but it was just, I just didn't know, you know, I didn't know what to do, I'm alone in this house, I'd planned to be there for five days, I'm only on the third day, and then I looked over at the fire, and it's moving, and it's alive, and I kind of walked over to the fire, and I looked at it, and it was like this living creature, and I started to get mesmerized by the fire, and I was looking at it, and I'd spent a lot of time with fires, we

had five fireplaces in my house growing up, and I was looking at the fire, and you know, on the top was the most massive part of the fire, and down below, as I was looking, were these, like down around one log, when a little individual flame would come up, and then another individual flame, and there were like these little individuals that weren't part of the mass of the whole, and I don't know if you've ever watched fires, but they're happy, fires aren't sad, and I was looking at this fire as I was feeling this ache, and the more I just kind of went into watching this fire, I became kind of hypnotized by it, I was kind of entranced by this fire, and I started looking at these little individual fires that were separate, they were their own thing, and I'd watch them, and I'd watch them move, and how they were happy and moving around, and they were kind of like these living creatures to me, and then I noticed these little creatures, and they had their own life, and their own dance, and then if they had any opportunity at all, they'd try to join the big fire, even though if they joined that big fire, they'd disappear, they are annihilated, they don't exist anymore, it's this individual little event, and suddenly it's just part of the big, it disappeared, for me, hell was like someone said, oh, just like being a drop in the water, to me that would be hell, I was in New York trying to be an actress, right? It was like, and the fact that these little flames were seeking out other flames, and they had this life, and they were sacrificing their life happily to become part of the big happy, and I just kept watching this fire, this later, years later, I refer to this as a fire meditation that I did years later, but this was a decade before I meditated, and I was watching this fire, and later on in the fire, I noticed that I had become quite calm as I was watching this fire, and then the fire started to get less and less, and the fire had been my friend, it was like this living creature, and I was watching it live and die, and be born, little ones get born, and then they would join the other, and give up their lives to be part of this whole, and then as the fire got less and less, I realized that I was feeling quite peaceful, and happy, and instead of going in the bedroom to sleep that night, I slept in front of the fire, and we went to sleep together, and I woke up the next morning, and it was a fascinating thing, the loneliness was gone, and I have never for an instant since that moment experienced loneliness, it was gone, and I, in the last forty years of my life, I have lived alone for thirty of them, and I've never been lonely, in fact I take vacations to be alone, because I don't get enough alone time, okay, maybe it's because I teach and act, and when I'm with people, I'm really with people, and I call these things, I call it my people fast, and I go camping, and I go, and when I came to California in ninety two is when I really started doing it, and I go camping by myself, in total solitude, usually on top of a mountain, although for the last fifteen years I have a nice little spot up on the coast of California, where I get to watch the sun and moon set into the ocean from my sleeping bag, and it's an environmental site, there's no one anywhere, and I go up for anywhere from four to twelve days, by myself, at least twice a year, never lonely for an instant, okay, and people, when I tell them I do these camping trips, I usually get three questions, the first one is, are you too afraid, and of course, don't be silly, this is my refuge, nature is my, that's my womb, right, the second question for some reason, I don't know why everyone asks it, but what do you eat? I have no idea why people ask that question, and I used to just take whatever food I could have, but after I did a vision quest years later, which I'll tell you about in a minute, but a vision quest is a Native American ceremony, we spend four days and nights alone on a mountain with no food or water, and of course, the alone on the mountain part is what they think of as a sacrifice, I'm good with that, no food, I could go, no water, you know, you lose your mind a little bit on the third night, or I did, anyway, but the reason I'm bringing that up in terms of what do you eat, on your vision quest, you have no food, so your relationship to animals is quite different when you have no food, right? Animals just want to know, are you going to eat them, or can they eat something you have, right? And I remember when I went on my vision quest, you know, you're in a small six by six foot space with no tent, you don't have a tent there, and you're out in the open, and it's surrounded by prayer ties, which are, you pray with tobacco, and you put it in a little piece of cloth, and you wrap it up, and you make a prayer with it, and they're your prayers, and there's 200 prayer ties, so your prayers, you're surrounded by your prayers in this little open exposed spot, and they say, animals will not cross your boundary, the walluta will protect you, I think the animals just smell the tobacco, but in any event, when I did my vision quest, it just so happened that I put my sight in the middle of what turned out to be a four lane animal highway. It was the only

spot where two bridges joined, so at night, when it got night, you know, in the day, I'm going, isn't this wonderful, and at night, I'd hear the animals come in, and they go, stop, you know, like, what's there, some big animal made a nest in the middle of their path, right? And then I heard them all kind of gathering around, going, what do we do, I don't know, do we go around with it? And then I kind of made sounds like, you know, I wanted them to go about their business, but I wanted to go about mine, and they just realized there was an animal in their path that made a nest, what do they do? And so I just started making sounds because I thought that I wanted them to know that I'm staying, but I'm not interested in them, so I, you know, and they kind of, you know, just kind of did it and settled, and then slowly, then little ones would just kind of go by, and little ones would go by, and I went to sleep with animals just kind of moving around me during the course of the night.

And I loved that relationship with animals during my whole vision quest, once someone would just kind of come up and sniff and go by. So people ask me back to my camping trips, what do I eat? And I take very little food for that reason, I like that relationship with animals. There's a third question I get when people say, you know, you're going up for 12 days alone on a hill, is what do you do? And in fact, Shenzhen asked me, what do you do? And I said, really? You don't know what I do? And he went, no, I really don't.

But I think maybe he couldn't imagine being alone on a mountain, and maybe that was part of it. But one thing I do say when everyone asks me, what do you do? I say, I don't know, but that 12 days goes by like four hours. It just goes by like that, it's gone. Now I have different techniques I do, usually when I'm on the hill, I'm sitting here and I'm looking at the ocean, and I'm on a little jet of wind that goes out into the ocean on the California coast, so it's kind of like I'm at sea, like whales will be out there, and I've got sky moving all around, and I've got the grass right here blowing in the wind, and I can see it right now, and the trees are right here, and so there's this flow everywhere. And I know I just sit there and watch flow until there is just flow, and I'm not really there anymore. And I also know that when I get there, climbing up, because to get to this site that is away from other people, you've got to hike in, and I take stuff, right? So it takes me four hours of going back and forth, and the hill is about 45 degree angle, so I get this little cart behind me, and I don't weigh a lot, and I put a lot back there, so the cart sometimes is a little heavier than I am, because I want to get stuff up there, and so I'll have the cart behind me, and so I'm bent over forward at a 45 degree angle, so my face, the dirt is here, and my face is here. Sorry, my Madonna thing is moving. And so I will literally go up the hill that way, and I used to go into meditation, you know, and do see rest, or see out, or something like that, but what I now do when I'm carrying my cart, who is seeing? Who is pulling? I just do a couple questions of self inquiry, and then there is just activity happening, and I'm not really there, right? And so that's kind of, so when I'm on the hill, everyone says, what do you do? It's like, I don't know, because I'm not there.

I'm not there. So anyway, the other thing I wanted to say is, what I noticed started to happen, these trips started as my gift to myself for my birthday. Then they became something I had to do.

It's like if I didn't do it that year, it was like, I forgot, it's like saying you forgot to eat, or sleep, or breathe, or you know, it was an essential thing I needed. In fact, I'm going on a trip after this retreat for a week. But I noticed something started happening. When I'm getting ready to go, I'm packing up to go for camping, I noticed the minute I'm done fixing everything I have to do in my life, you know, you had to come on retreat, the minute I start packing, something would click, and I was in ceremony. It was like, I got it from my birthday ceremony.

It was like, ah, it was my birthday. There was something about the packing and everything that it didn't matter if I was there or not. In fact, I've been there so many times, I know every rock and thing. I don't even have to go, it's here, it's inside me, you know, but every, the packing itself, everything clicked in, and I was in ceremony, and I was just happy, driving up,

and it didn't matter if I was doing a meditation technique or not, this kind of in ceremony thing would click in and happen, and I didn't have the word in ceremony until after I did Native American ceremonies, that's where I learned that. Then I'm going to shift for a moment to, so I was doing that here from 92 to 98, and I was having all sorts of interesting experiences from 92 to 98, some, what I guess we would call mystical or spiritual experiences were happening, but I didn't know anyone to talk to about that. I was a New Yorker, and if anyone said mystical or spiritual, I'd leave the room.

Usually I was a very cynical New Yorker, so I hadn't cultivated friends to talk to, and in fact, as soon as this stuff happened is when I left New York, so I didn't even know anybody out here. So I spent six years with these things happening, kind of creating my own system of what to do with them, and then I thought, you know, I really want to talk to somebody about this, and I just didn't know who knew about this, and so I'd kind of go, and this was before Google and internet, and you know, you could call operators and ask them questions about things, but they don't really know, and I'd go in the phone book and look at centers and kind of put my head in the door, and they'd say, no, you have to bow to this person, or you have to do this over here, and I knew that wasn't the direct route I wanted, because I knew where it was. I just wanted to talk to someone, and finally I said, you know, I don't think I'm going to find anybody, so maybe I'll meditate. The idea of sitting still for five minutes I thought was one of the most ridiculous concepts you could have, but I thought, you know, maybe I'll do that, and there's something there, so I went down to the Bodhi Tree, which is this spiritual bookstore that doesn't exist anymore in LA, and I asked the young guy behind the counter who had a Walkman, again, I'm dating myself, and I looked at all the books, and it was just overwhelming, and I said, I like to experience things. I said, is there any kind of tape or recording, and he said, oh, yeah, over here, there's a five meditations by this guy named Shinzen Young, and I said, perfect. He said, there's five different kinds, and it went perfect. I got an appetizer platter.

I can pick which one I like. And so I went, I was house sitting for someone in Mar Vista, so I lit candles, and I made a bath, because that's what I thought you had to do to meditate, and then I got stoned, because I thought that's what you had to do to meditate. And so every night I did one of these meditations, and there was karma yoga, and mantra, and loving kindness, and Kabbalah. I thought it was Kabbalah, but it's not.

It's Kabbalah. And then Vipassana was one of them, and I really went, oh, each one, I was like, yeah, that works so well, until I got to that Vipassana one. I thought, that is just a little too technical, that one, but the other four were great, right? And then I thought, you know, but I come from a family of teachers. My mom's a teacher. My sisters are teachers. They're all like famous teachers in their worlds.

And so I thought, you know, that guy explains things really well. Let me see if I can find him. But I tried to find LA Meditation Center, and the operator was not helping me at all, because it didn't exist anymore. And I went, oh, well. And then about a month later, some guy called me and said, you know that guy that you were looking for? He's on KPFK now. And I turned on KPFK, and I heard him. He sounded older.

He still sounded like a woman, but he sounded older. And I listened to him, and they said, this is Shinzen Young, Vipassana Support Institute. And I went, oh, man.

Of all those cool meditations, he chose Vipassana? That was the technical one, you know? But he was the teacher. You know, when I went to college, I said, what should I learn? And my mom and her mom both said, just go to what the good teachers are teaching. And I thought, I'm not listening to you. I'm not going to learn just what the good teachers are teaching.

But now I wanted a good teacher, and he explained things well. So I find myself at a first retreat. I've never sat for longer than five minutes in my life, and I'm at a meditation retreat. And everyone's got these mats, and we said, Holy Spirit up in Encino. And everybody's at

the beginning going around, and it's a long hall.

Like he would be up here, and it's a long hall. And everybody wants to get up close, and they're all sitting around and getting their little what I thought were campsites. And they get their little campsites here, and everyone had their campsites.

And they wanted to real quick get there, and it really depended on where they were. And then they sit and close their eyes. And they're closing their eyes facing a blank wall. There's nobody here.

And I thought, what does it matter where you are in the room if your eyes are closed? I didn't understand this. And then Shunzhen came in, and I then talked and was eloquent, and I went, that's the guy. Oh, wow. Listening to him was so inspiring. He was talking about things I knew, but with clarity and shining light on it in a different way. But then they talked about, you know, you talk about the za. There was a zabutan, and a zafu, and yaza. And so I assumed this was zabo. I thought there was a za for everything, right? And so on this retreat, everybody's walking around, and when they're talking, up to this retreat, he had been teaching is his meditation technique. Apparently, and by the way, since then I've done a seven-hour video interview with him of his beginning all the way up through the five ways. And for 20 years, he taught nothing but noting location of body sensation, where you just sit there, go knee, elbow, nose, you know, shoulder.

That was it. And at this retreat, he was doing talk, image, feel, and everyone was freaking the F out. They were like, what are you doing? Can we just please go back to noting location of body sensation? And I didn't know what any of it was, right? But first timers, we had to go in a room and count one to 10, and you had to visualize the number one, say the number one, and then do it on your breath.

So you're feeling a breath, seeing and hearing the number one. And we had to go one to 10, and I thought that was the stupidest thing anyone had ever asked anyone to do. And I looked around, and everyone's like, oh, yeah, this is interesting. And I thought, I need to leave this room now. Okay? I thought, you know, I'm just going to listen to him when he talks. You know, I have something I can do with my eyes closed that's good. And then I'm walking down, and everyone's fluttering to sign up for something called an online, where they go in some room and talk on the telephone.

No, thank you. And I'm going down the hall, and there was only one man I talked to the first day, Michael, Michael Basler, you might know. And I was walking down the hall, and he was going in one of those rooms, and he pulled me aside, and he said, did you sign up for one of these? And I went, no. And he said, you really need to do this. And I went, it's okay, I'm good. And he went, he said, no, you take mine. And he just kind of thrust me into that room.

Well, that moment kind of changed my life. So I'm going in this room, I'm putting on a headset going, this is so weird. This is so weird. And I'm sitting there looking around, what are we supposed to do? And then Shinzen comes on and goes, Michael? And I said, no, this is Stephanie. Michael had me come in instead of him. And he went, ah, so how was your practice? I've never meditated. I said, I'm a new person.

And he went, oh, so do you have any questions? And I said, you know, actually, I do. You know, this whole talk image feel thing, you know, I teach people how to juggle. I know how to do it. I know how to get three things going.

I can do that. So it's not that I can't do it. But what is the point? I mean, it feels, plus it's so technical. It feels like playing scales. I was an oboe player. I stopped because I hated playing scales. I just wanted to play the music.

And he said, you know, it is playing scales. But the music is your life. Good answer. Good answer.

Music is your life. I stood in one minute. I shouldn't want to do it. But that was a good answer. He impressed me with that. And then I said, but, you know, I can close my eyes. I had a spontaneous experience about a year earlier that happened to me.

And ever since then, all I had to do was close my eyes. Everything dissolves into this light that is everything. There is no me.

There is no anything. And I can just go to that. And when I open my eyes, I'm barely beaming down. Everyone's beaming down. And I see how that light is really all that's here too.

And it fills me with love and everything for the world. I said, I can do that. You still think I need talking much feel? And he said, and people, whenever I told that to people, they go, oh, you're going to a blissy place. And I thought, that seems kind of condescending. I go, can you close your eyes and do you? But either way, and I said, this is what I do.

People have told me it's a blissy place. And I said, you still think I need talking much feel? And he said, there's going to come a time when the doo-doo hits the AC and you're not going to be able to go to that blissy place. And I said, oh, yes, I am. I said, I can do this anytime I want. I've never not been able to go to a blissy place. And he said, no, there's going to come a time when things happen, circumstances in your life, and that will not be available to you.

And then what do you do? He said, I'm teaching you techniques to be able to work with your sensory experience in a way so that you can optimize anything that happens in your life. Another good answer. And I said, okay, all right. And so he said, so try it and I'll get back to you in 25 minutes. He had five people in a room then. So I went, okay, that was a good answer.

All right, I'll try it. And I started doing it and about four minutes later, he comes back online and he says, can you teach anyone how to juggle? And I said, yeah, pretty much. He said, can you teach me how to juggle? And I said, well, have you ever played a ball sport? And he said, what's that? And I said, have you ever had to take a ball and aim it, throw it and aim where it goes? And he went, oh no, and I'm really spastic. And I said, okay, well then it'll take longer, but you know about that. So after that retreat, over the next three months, about five or six times, I am over at Shirley Fenton's house.

She's in bed, Shinsun's here and I am teaching him how to juggle. And I'm saying, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Put your hand here, put your hand here. No, no, just into my hand.

So if I'm here beside you, put it here. So I'm in a teacher mode to him and he's going, oh, okay. And then one time he got like a flash where you just kind of throw three and catch them. And I said, that's a flash.

And Shinsun went, oh, I did a flash, I did a flash. And I thought, wow, this is the same man who gives those amazing Dharma talks. And so I had a different relationship with him from the first moment. So anyway, because of this relationship with him, and oh, when he asked me to teach him to juggle, he said, then I will mentor you in your meditation practice. So he would call me on the phone all the time and say, so how's your practice? And I go, well, I'm doing this and this.

And I ended up marrying the man I sat next to at the first retreat. And he'd been with Shinsun seven years. And he said, you know, Shinsun has never once called me to ask me about my practice.

And I said, yeah, but you're not teaching him how to juggle. So then Shinsun takes me to a sweat lodge ceremony. And we're going to go to a sweat lodge ceremony, talk about it a lot. And they talk about how hot it's going to be.

And I'm really good with heat. And I'm in the backseat of the car with him and another man, Bill. And Shinsun's in the front seat, pounding, like, so loud on a drum and howling in Yakuta. You know, the song's going, isn't this great? And he's just going on and on and on. The whole car is rambling with this.

And then they stop. And they turn to each other and go, oh, yeah, wasn't that one hot? And yeah, that one's hot. Yeah, we really purified on that one, you know.

And they were just talking about this heat. And I'm getting kind of nervous, you know. Like, I just want to know if I'm going to survive, little things like that. And so I kind of mention, I go, you know, how long actually are we in there? And you know, I'm getting a little nervous about this.

And Shinsun turns around and goes, ah, you're nervous. Then your ceremony has begun. The ceremony has reached forward in time and grabbed you by the belly button. And I said, excuse me? And he said, if you're focusing on it, you're connected to the ceremony already. And in that moment, I remembered what happened before I went camping. When I kind of went in ceremony, before I went camping, I was there.

Except this was more of a sense of dread and fear and that kind of stuff. Well finally, we get to the sweat lodge. And I love, there's a fire. It's around a fire.

I'm happy. I like fires. And there was a fire there.

And there's sage. And it all smells good. And we go inside a lodge.

And I'm behind him. And then they come in. And these red hot rocks come in. And it's, oh, it's like primal.

It's so cool. And they put them in the center. And they bring them with antlers, you know. And then they bring in the wakhan, the water, the big bucket of water. And they close the door. And then the rock glows. And then they take the water. And then they start to, they sing.

He's singing a song. And he throws it on the rocks. And wherever he throws the water on the rocks, it goes black there. So the light starts going out. And then he throws it on three times. And you hear this pshh, pshh, as the water hits the rocks.

And then suddenly it occurs to me that water and rocks will be steam. I'm great with heat. I'm great in saunas. I can't breathe in the steam room. I don't do well with steam. No one ever said the word steam.

For some reason, it never occurred to me that we were going to be sitting in steam. Heat, yes, good. Steam, no. I am panicking. And I'm going, oh shoot, this is going to be steam. This is going to be steam.

Internal talk, just running amok. And then suddenly this big wall of steam hits me and envelops me. And you're just going, and I think I didn't breathe for a moment. And then there's a little hysteria in my head.

But the steam kind of kept me going for a while. And Shinzen warned me, whatever you do, don't you get out of this law, Julie, because you're representing me. And he's right here in front of me.



Like I'm right here with the rocks and he's right there. And I'm like, why am I doing this? I'm going to die. This is the end of my life as I know it. And you think you can't breathe. So I make it through the first round.

And then they lift the flap. And I know there's going to be three more of these. So I went, OK, I survived that one.

I can survive three more. The third round is one where they don't sing. And all they do is sit there and put the water on the rocks and all you hear is the sound of the water and the psh, psh going on the rocks.

And they do it. And that's the purify round where it gets so hot that I sat there, my ears were singeing. And then it literally, I started getting goosebumps all over my skin as if I was cold. And I literally sat there and then suddenly my mind stopped. It was so hot. My, it just like, the heat just went, wha. And I was in a suspended period of no thinking for the first time in my life. It was amazing.

And so after that, I thought, OK, that was interesting. We had another round. We came out. Xin Zhen and Bill and I are getting in the car and I just feel euphoric.

I'm just like, wow, that was really great. And Xin Zhen said, yes, that's the taste of purification. And I went, OK.

And he said, yes, it's in Anipi. It's a purification lodge. And I love this ceremony they had where everyone came with this focus and they had a way of talking when you're in the lodge. They had a way they do activities. Everyone's focus comes in and creates this ceremony and this purification. And in that lodge, if you cry in that lodge, that's a blessing to the ceremony.

I thought, this is so friggin cool. I fell in love with it and I did sweat lodge every week for the next six years, except on nights that women can't go. You can't go on your moon time. But other than that, I was there every night for the next six years. I thought that was kind of the greatest thing in the world. And then after that, then I did a vision quest that I told you about a little bit. And one thing I want to say about the vision quest is that Xin Zhen kind of tricked, well, anyway, how I did the vision quest is another thing. But one thing about a vision quest and being out in nature and that ceremony, and that's another ceremony where people come and they support you and they have that kind of special focus on it. You're sitting in one spot in nature, watching the sun rise, go across the sky and down, all the stars come and it comes up again. By the time you're 60, you will have spent about 22,000 days on this planet.

And rarely do you ever stop to just watch one of them. So the vision quest is where I learned that time would shift. It was three days, but it was like time opened up and there was more time. So my camping trips after the vision quest, I stopped moving. Before that I was hiking. After my vision quest, I just sit there.

And I don't move for 12 days and I don't need much food when I'm not moving. But that ceremony, so the sacred ceremony of the sweat lodge, and that's when I started calling my camping in ceremony, and this notion of being in ceremony. I started using it in my life, going, ah, I'm going in ceremony now. Everything I do now will be sacred.

There's a certain kind of focus in on it. And I used to light a candle to remind me I'm in ceremony. One thing though, I will say, when I camp alone, there were maybe four occasions in 20 years where I did call shenzhen. And one time I called shenzhen, I was out on the hill looking over everything, and I decided I wanted to hold all of visual, auditory, and somatic experience at the same time, but keep them separate and distinct. And this was before see, hear, feel, this is the five ways, what we were rocking and rolling on at that time.

And so I said, I want to spatially hold them all. I was a very ambitious meditator. So I went, okay, feel is easy. It's in the body. It's in the sense of that. See, it was before seeing, so visual was easy, because it's here and it's all forward. Here was a little tricky, because it's here and it goes out to the side. So that space of here to hold both here in and here out was a little trickier, because it went out in here and see kind of crossed over a little bit here.

But I did it and I got to where I held all of them at the same time. And then I treated it like a three dimensional pizza and I wanted to cut the cheese. I wanted to really draw a line between it. So I had distinct lines between all of them and cutting around the body was easy between see and here was a little gnarly. And I would just, and I was really, I was in deep concentration and I was really, and I finally, and I was just at the edge of cutting the cheese on seeing in here. And then I did it. I cut the cheese and then all three of them flew out. See flew out there, here flew out here, body flew out here, leaving nothing in the center.

I mean, I'd experienced the source before, but not that way. And I went, that is so cool. I have to call Shenzhen.

I have to tell him, this is what we should teach everyone. All you have to do is a three slice pizza, you know, visual, auditory, somatic, and then cut the cheese. And so I call Shenzhen on the phone and I say, this is it.

We're going to do this and cut the cheese. And he went, well, here's what I see is an issue with that. He said, everyone's not going to be able to hold all three spaces. And some people are going to find it difficult to, as you say it, cut the cheese. He said, and I'm quite happy with the five ways right now. I really think that is the way we're going to go. And I said, but this is just three things.

It could take them a week. And he's like, thank you, but I think I'm good with the five ways. And I was disappointed and I watched my sensations, but I went back and I thought that was the most novel thing in the world. So what, four years later, five years later, when he came up with See, Hear, Feel, I was like, see? Because at that time, feel was just emotional. So I called it seeing, hearing, body is what I called it.

But basically it was called the three slice cut the cheese. Anyway, that's an example of that ceremony. Then after doing my ceremony and doing the sweat lodge ceremonies for a long time, I started seeing retreats as the ceremony.

And I thought, you know, it's really interesting. We all kind of come, it's sacred. Everyone's bringing their focus. It's one thing about the Native American ceremony, everyone brings their focus, but everyone's working on their own thing. You cry for you, we all get blessed by that.

And here I thought, everyone's coming, everyone's working on their own thing, but yet we're supported by the group. And there was something kind of sacred about that. And I started seeing retreats as a kind of ceremony. And then I started to see how the ceremony held us, like in the sweat lodge ceremonies, you know, the drumming's there and everybody. The whole ceremony itself kind of supports you, kind of in the way Shinzen was talking about the Zen, you do that and then that kind of movement supports you in that way.

And I started seeing how this kind of supported us. And everyone has a time on retreat when you're, you know, you can't get focused or you're getting emotional or your knees or butt hurt or, you know, you think you're doing the technique wrong or someone in the Zen Do is moving or eating a sandwich or something, right? And there's just something going on that's a challenge and there's always somebody who's doing their own practice, but it's inspiring, right? So everybody's own practice contributes to this kind of whole ceremony that we come to. And as I started seeing that as a ceremony, when I came, I started packing

for retreats in the way I did for when I was camping.

It's like I'm the ceremony now. And I'd come and I'd listen to a Dharma talk and even if it was like, oh, I'm too busy, it didn't stop your life to come. And then after the second day, I'd listen and I'd go, this is the most important work we can do. You know, all that other stuff I had to do that's really, really important. I have all these lists that are going to do when I get back.

This has to happen first. If everyone on the planet was doing this, there would be no problems, right? I thought, wow, this work is sacred, you know, what we're doing. And we're not coming here and gathering around a fire. We're gathering around this brilliant man who's created a vocabulary and terminology for sensory experience so we can talk about the most subtle and deep aspects of anything and communicate about it. And we can tell him what's happening and as teachers, we know what's going on with somebody and we can share this language and be able to help people. And I'll just say as a teacher on this retreat, I've been getting a good workout.

But I will say the joy as a teacher, to use his system as a teacher, the effective result of it is unlike anything. I mean, that newcomer group that didn't just have newcomers, I mean, you guys rock. You know it, right? I mean, the reports of what they were doing were things that most people I know weren't doing until their third retreat.

They're processing, oh yeah, I had this huge feeling and I let it go through and then I felt peace. I mean, it's just like rock and roll. We do high fives for that stuff. But it was, I really, like at this retreat, I appreciated having this to work with to help people, honoring it. But I also, and in my life, I work with people who don't know Shenzhen system. I'm using his system to help people rewire habit patterns of thinking, feeling, behaving to help them suffer less and be happier, you know, but they don't know the system.

So here people are coming in with these advanced questions of depths of the system. So I got a good workout I haven't had in a long time. And I thought, wow, it just made me feel so like I'm doing something I'm supposed to be doing. And then I thought I'm not, I could meditate here.

I can teach here. They're kind of the same thing except one I'm talking more, right? Like the fulfillment, the mudita, oh my gosh, this is mudita city here at the moment. And you know what that is. And so anyway, I was just feeling this gratitude for this, this man who has created this vocabulary and this system of categorizing sensory experience and giving us strategies and techniques that are the yellow brick road to the source and happiness. And there's an infinite variety of ways within the system you can take. You can go whichever way feels good for you.

All roads lead to the source. And I just always, every time I'm teaching it, every time I'm working with someone who's getting a haas and shifting, I feel this thrilling kind of excitement and gratitude. It's kind of like how I felt on my birthday ceremonies, right? With this, that we're all kind of coming together. And also the other thing that he developed is this interactive meditation. Who else does that? That's like exploratory surgery. Someone's meditating. You can meditate with them and interactively whatever's happening, they've got an expert guiding them where to go, which is what he does on online. But as teachers, we learn how to do that.

What a tool for helping the planet. So sometimes we're challenged and we can get inspiration from those that are sitting longer. And other times we're sitting here inspired with gratitude. We can come here and get insight into how we are born in each moment.

The waves come in and go out and between them the foam is created and that's us. To quote him, we are born in the cleft of expansion and contraction in each moment. And we come here in this ceremony to share this. And if we're born in each moment, then today is

your birthday. Today is our birthday. And I wish that your, I hope that your birthday ceremony contributes to you becoming a better person and experiencing happiness independent of condition. Happy birthday.

Happy birthday. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

## BEING KNOWN TO DEATH ~ Shinzen Young

How about if we took everything as our object? Well, that's actually not that much bigger than mind-body, just sights and sounds. Sounds are, people usually find pretty easy. Sight, ah, that's a lot more challenging. But with practice you can start to sort of get a complete experience or something near a complete experience of the sights in front of you. And that's very rich and also very transparent. So it sort of seems like there's just this shaft of knowing that goes from your eyes, I don't know how to describe it, it goes through the back of your head, out through your eyes, out to the farthest regions of the visual space and it's just like this shaft of clarity that, like it bores a wormhole from void to void through the somethingness of the surrounding scene.

Each time your eye shifts, here, here, here, here, you're actually sort of seeing the world, but you're also seeing the source on, like looking in from all sides at once. So it's very rich and very freeing and empty sort of looking. It's like, and it's not so much even that you're noting, it's like you're being known by pure consciousness. The surrounding scene is being known. Known to death.

## Can ordinary experience count as meditation? ~ Shinzen Young

an art, for example, piano playing or the martial arts or dancing, they might approach the art in a way that not only do they become extraordinarily focused while they're doing their art, but that there's a carryover into daily life and they notice month after month, year after year, as the result of having done that art in a certain way, their base level of focus in daily life has changed. So even though they're not calling it meditation, it is de facto a meditation.

So if I do that, I don't have to actually do regular meditation, I can just do my ballet or piano? Well, yes, but there's a tricky point because the issue is not do you become extraordinarily focused while you're doing the endeavor. That's not that uncommon. What is much less common is that there's a carryover and you notice in daily life, in other activities, that because of the way you're doing your art, that every moment of your life is being informed by an elevated sense of focus. That's fairly unusual, but that is zen and the art of.

You may have heard that expression, zen and the art of archery, zen and the art of flower arranging tea. Is that in the zone too? Yes and no. No? It is yes in the sense that there is this locker room or sports term to be in the zone. And that is the term that's used for entering a state of extraordinary concentration, say during your performance of sport.

And of course, it's highly desirable. The baseball player, Ted Williams, used to say he knew he was in the zone when he could see the pitch coming at him. He could see the stitches on the ball and those pitches come at like 100 miles an hour, right? So sports people call that in the zone. Once again, it's not entirely uncommon for somebody to, quote, enter the zone during their performance. What is uncommon is that they do it in such a way that there's a carryover into daily life.

There has to be the carryover. Remember I defined the common denominator of meditation is, well, not just concentration, but your base level of concentration. When you're not trying to be concentrated, what are you like in daily life? To count as meditation, something has to consistently elevate your base level of concentration. So anything that does that is a meditation, whether it's called meditation or not. But it's not just a matter of you get concentrated while you do it. It's a matter of you get concentrated while you do it in a way that it retrains your ordinary perceptions. So that's why I'm very specific about elevate your base level, because it's not uncommon that a person will become extraordinarily focused in some endeavor.

It is, however, relatively uncommon that that carryover into daily life in a dramatic way that grows consistently with time. Without special instruction, usually that doesn't happen. They just have it spontaneously, but there's not the effect on life. So that's why you actually do these formal meditation techniques and practices, because that more directly elevates that base level? Well, yes. In other words, we can imagine, based on your line of questioning, that there could be some ordinary activity you're doing as a meditation. And then there could be some special exercises that you do that usually involve sitting still and focusing in some way and whatever, and you do those. Now in either case, you could have an elevation of your base level of concentration, and that elevation needs to grow dramatically with time. If that's the case, then either of those count as meditation. But usually people that get spontaneously focused, unless somebody points out to them that it is necessary and possible to carry this over in daily life, they usually don't. So it becomes a dead end, and it's not really a meditation, even though they may become very much in the zone while they perform their sport or their art. So in theory, you don't have to do systematic formal exercises that involve sitting and that kind of thing, in theory. But probably...

Reality. But probably, if you want to do it through an art, you probably will still need some coaching into how to make your art carry over the state of the zone. Do you do that? Do you coach people how to turn the art into being in the zone? Yeah, I can do that. Oh, that's cool. I can coach a person to make their running or their singing, what have you. I can coach them so that they get the carry over. But more typically, people will also do formal meditation practice, sitting in silence and so forth. So the upshot is that the common denominator of every form of meditation around the world, inside or outside of religion, would be that they elevate base level of concentration.

## Catching a Free Ride ~ Shinzen Young and Stephanie Nash

Yes. In terms of simultaneous expansion and contraction, something that I realized just in the last day or two, I kind of noted, how much I was appreciating something that used to be disturbing, was as soon as something arises it has begun to pass away. And I was appreciating that, and I was appreciating the space it creates, and how holding on to something doesn't even occur when you're working with that.

And then I switched to the teacher mind and thought, okay, what's a fun game that I can create to help people just kind of touch in on that? And I remembered noting gone with quick sounds, like the peacocks or the woman with the high heels or the clock ticking. And I had mentioned before how it reminded me of when I was in high school and had a Ford Pinto and lived 1,500 miles away from home, and I had to drive long distances and had no money, and I learned to get behind trucks. There was this little parking lot. And what is it, draft? And I could go forever without using any gas.

There was this magic space behind trucks. They don't like that, by the way. Well, it's not because it's dangerous.

You shouldn't be doing it. But it was a long time ago and I did it. And because, you know, it was like, oh wow, this is so cool. And it was like there was this magic space behind the trucks where you got a free ride. And I started thinking of every little... Because usually when an arising happens we turn and look at it and then it's gone before we jump to the arising and we miss the gone and then the next one comes. And I got to where I was thinking of arisings as each having this magic space behind them where you get a free ride.

Oh, cool. That's a great metaphor. You know, and so every time something arose I'd go, free ride, free ride. And it helped me not solidify on the arising. And I was just thinking of that as we... Today as we were doing this and as I was... I did that as our middle thing. And I thought, oh, that might be a fun game to help people just get a taste of not attaching to the solidity of the arising.

As we say in the industry... Can I use that? Eddie, no. No, he didn't come back. That was for him. Oh, that's great. Free ride. Okay. Life may not be a free lunch, but it is a free ride. It is a free ride.



## CREATIVE WAY to ZOOM thru INTENSE EMOTIONS ~ Shinzen

### Young

Now you know how in a, like in a ghost movie, you see that like the ghost can walk through the wall, right? Right. The ghost passes through the wall, the wall gives no resistance. Now imagine you didn't have a ghost and a wall, but you had two ghosts and they were both doing their own thing, but they could pass through each other without disturbing each other when they occupied the same place at the same time. So you're going to have these two ghostly waves, one flavored fear, the other flavor sad, and they're sort of dancing, except unlike physical dancers, parts of them, even all of them can occupy the same place.

So they're constantly waving and the waves pass through each other without disturbing each other, without developing pressure areas where they would clash. Does this metaphor make sense? Yeah. Have you attempted to do this with the fear and sad? Not in this, not this round. This may be the part of the missing piece because you could get them individually to flow, but then the next step is collectively to flow because if they both flow at the same time, interpenetrating wherever they need to without interfering, then they won't multiply together into overwhelm. So the ability to have more than one flavor and to separate the flavors, have all the flavors flow, and then have the flow fields interpenetrate without interference is a sequence that I take people through when they're going through big challenges that are polychromatic body distress, meaning a lot of different colors in the body. Then we need to train the colors to flow through each other. It's an interesting, it's an interesting intimacy between them. Yeah. It's like they're dancing through each other as well as with each other.

And to the extent that they're both flowing, you'll get an even more powerful flavor of purification and hopefully a significantly deeper sense of relief. Right. How's that coming? Good. Good. Good in what sense? When I can allow them both to share the same space and not... and I'm recognizing how I've been keeping them separate and keeping that line between them and when I allow them to just kind of do that... The kind of joy I talked about before with the fear, it's a very intense version of that and then it kind of seems to ignite this kind of PT-like energy up the body and it gets very hot. So you're getting hot and rapturous with fear and sadness. Yes, I am.

This is what most people would say is rather counterintuitive, but your facial expression proves it. Yes. Okay, good.

It's really interesting though because as it does, I find myself wanting to comment on it and I'll go off and talk and then it loses it a little bit. Yes, and you have to come back. It's got to be done purely in the body. Yes. Because the comments and then... It does trigger some little topics to go, but this is all about it. That's right, but your use of practice allows you to stop that and not sort of go down in that. Yes, plus there's motivation to kind of stay with this.

It's intrinsically rewarding. Now, next step, see if you can have the fear and the sadness dancing with and through each other with your eyes open. And you may find defocusing the eyes initially helpful. So we can maintain it somewhat into a more ordinary experience. Okay. It's interesting when I am, as I kind of go in and out here as I do it, and I'm going to talk while keeping my eyes open, but I'm getting to where I'm honing in on the one specific place in the body they both share in a powerful way. And if I can just kind of keep track of flow there, letting it be, whether it's the red or blue, you know, it kind of helps me maintain it with my eyes open more. Good.

## DAVE VAGO shares his (MIND) BOARD

This is a board. Ha ha, yes. With brains.

Definitely a board. And writing. And here is Dave Vago. This is his board. Now, who are you? No one really.

No one. Ha ha, yes. I mean, what's interesting probably about this board is it just represents some person's thoughts from the past year or two that, you know, sort of gives you a sort of an external scratch pad in which to sort of put all your thoughts into one place. Sometimes it's nice. It's easier to put it there than to keep it in here, right? So what you're seeing is, yes, exactly that. It's the things that have happened in my sort of head for a long time. But we really just start here with this quote up here. This happiness is unintended side effect of one's personal dedication to a course greater than oneself. That sort of, I think, you know, being on the top sort of fuels the inspiration. And then, so let's see.

We can start anywhere, really. What is mindfulness? I mean, this is something that I'm always asking myself. I've got a few different versions of what other people have said it is, either self-regulation and present-centered awareness.

Other people have said, oh, well, it's actually intention, attention, and awareness. And so using that, I've tried to build upon that and come up with my own ideas, which are in different areas that didn't fit on the board, have been put in different parts of this room. But they sort of relate to this. If we go to what's happening in the mind when, you know, one is meditating, for example, these are just two modalities that sort of arise in people's minds.

And it's really talking about what happens if you start to understand how objects of one's attention, either visual or auditory, arise. We're going in it instead of a usual attempt. Time usually goes in that sort of linear horizontal plane. But here we're doing a vertical plane.

So time is really going down in this direction. So something arises, a visual object, a mental sort of image arises. And then it passes. And so you're able to, once you're able to refine your meditation techniques, you can start to really notice the change between arising and passing. And then eventually you get to a point where you can, you see things gone or vanish. And this can all be actually related to flow. Flow sort of can be experienced throughout the entire. What's flow? Flow is sort of just the dynamic changes of seeing things moving and rippling in time throughout the entire process. So it's not static. It's not ch-ch-ch-ch-ch. There's a constant change going on. And actually, so really this is a dynamic board too. It's just changed.

It's just changed. It's really rest work right there. And this flow is, relates to this whole sort of process can be in flow. But you can actually, once something vanishes, then you can actually rest and observe what's happening at rest. And then if something all disappears, then you can have cessation, which is sort of the road dots, the real true gone, the big G gone. Big G, is that what you call it? Big G, that's what Shinzen calls it.

Oh, okay. Big G versus little G, which is just the absence of that thing being there anymore, but the big G is something that's like complete absence of self and all the strands that make up everything in consciousness. But the other thing really that's worth saying about this is, well, that all sort of relates to what we're going to sort of define as to what is mindfulness.

And then I guess we can sort of move this way, I guess. This part of the brain is probably one of the most critical pieces, we think, for what's happening here, because what you don't see here, you see in here, but there's also a sort of somatic or viscerosomatic aspect of what's happening. And that viscerosomatic sensation of what's happening inside, putting like a feeling in the body for all motion, comes from this structure here. This is called the

insula. It's located sort of deep within the folds of your brain. So if you were to sort of open up, there's a little prop here. See, there's a brain.

Oh, a brain. So if you open up the fold here, actually it's probably better for you this way. Open up the fold here, this is the lateral fissure, and just open it up, you'll see this. And so that's the insula. What's so cool about it is that it represents sort of the whole internal sort of feeling states from very primary sort of sensory sort of information. It represents things like homeostatic motor function going on in the more posterior aspects. And then as you move more interior, you get these environmental sort of things going on in the body. And then you start moving to the more human-like things that are very unique to humans in the anterior portion. And this portion here is actually 35% larger in humans than it is in macaque monkeys. So there must be something special about it. Macaque monkeys actually only have this posterior and mid portion of it, and it's actually that whole posterior and mid portion is just extended throughout the entire length of the insula of macaque monkeys. There's also something really interesting about this anterior portion. It's more important for hedonic conditions like our motivational, social, cognitive feelings of other and yourself and how you relate to the world, the sort of more emotional types of states.

That part's here. There's also these special neurons here called von Economo neurons. They're very special types of neurons. It's possible that autistic children or adults even may not even have that type of neuron there, and that may be part of the reason that they don't have those type of connections with others and oneself. So this is a very special part of the brain anterior insula, which may be very important for meditation and developing an understanding of oneself. And so you may need this, and it actually grows in size after only eight weeks of meditation. How much? How much can it grow? I don't know. I mean, you do have a skull. Permanently grows? Yeah.

Will it grow and then go back down if you stop meditating? We don't know. That's a good question. So let's see. What else we got here? We got, we can focus right here, which is the stages of insight. So as you meditate, you can go through different various stages, and these are sort of described by different various people. This is described in the Sutta Magga, the path to liberation. So a traditional Buddhist text.

Other people have described it who are just more modern sort of Buddhist geeks, I guess you can call them, like Daniel Ingram or someone like that. And they sort of describe these stages as thought as a thought, cause and effect, impermanence, suffering, no self, realizing, those types of things. That's one stage. And then arising and passing away would be another sort of stage of realization or just understanding, anicca, or impermanence. And it sort of relates back to what this was, because remember I told you that you see arising and passing of an object, space, but this is just sort of a one-time thing. You may see the arising and passing of an object over and over and over again, until you realize, oh my God, everything is arising and passing, including myself. And that's sort of what this stage is really referring to.

Then eventually you move to dissolution, where everything sort of just dissolves. And that can be kind of scary. So you go through these stages, which some people refer to as the dark night, which is terror, misery, and disgust. And then once you get past that, which some people get through really quickly, some people take a long time, in any case then you can move into some aspect of re-observation, where you re-observe what's going on inside your head and you gain equanimity, which is a powerful sort of way of experiencing the world, sort of like a sturdy mast in a storm does on a sailboat.

And then you enter stream entry. And this may be a little bit overrated, but I'm not sure if this is a goal for everybody. But it's a state that people describe as sort of a selfless state, where it's a complete paradigm shift. And once you're there, it's not likely that you're going to come out of the stream. But it's one of the stages of developing insight. However, there's going to be arguments about this. Let's see. So where are we at right now? So we can go up here. There's a few brain areas. Oh, good. Brain areas.

Let's see. We can talk about the amygdala, which is really one of the areas that we're really interested in, and how it connects to all these different areas in the frontal lobe. These are the medial frontal areas. And there's numbers there.

Like, the numbers all correspond to different sort of sub-systems, really sub-areas of the brain that have been distinguished by the orientation of really just cells, but have also functional differences, like Area 25, BA25 is what they call the subgenual cingulate. It's interesting because you can stimulate this area in people who have intractable forms of depression, people who just can't be cured by drugs, psychotherapy, ECT, you name it. They just can't be cured. They have depression, and they're just in the blues.

They have a lot of problems. What they found is actually if you stimulate this area with deep brain stimulation, so electrodes deep into the brain go, suddenly they wake up, and they're happy. So it's really interesting to think that there can be those sort of substrates in the brain where you can stimulate, and suddenly people are happy who weren't.

So that's one of the reasons why we do this work, is so we can understand what areas of the brain are involved with different types of psychopathology and emotion, and then we can sort of better use these ideas as sort of diagnostic tools, and then for better targeted therapy. Then you have DLPFC, which is the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, which is important for working memory and sort of goal-directed thinking and sort of concentrations. Then this whole area can be considered sort of the orbital frontal cortex, that's OFC. And then the ACC, which is the anterior cingulate cortex, which is also one of the most important areas of the brain, because you see that area light up for practically everything. But the dorsal cingulate is probably one of the parts that are really important for meditation. We've seen that it grows also in size, like the insula, but has a different functional mechanism.

It's more monitoring, so like awareness, meta-awareness. Dorsal and anterior cingulate seems to be really important for that. So we can stay somewhere, let's see, we can move over to here, and we see mindfulness versus CBD. So this is sort of just a study that we were thinking of looking at, well, cognitive behavioral therapies happens to be one of the most effective sort of treatments for depression and anxiety and different other forms of psychopathology.

Well how does it hold up in a horse race against mindfulness? If we even know what mindfulness is, we can think of it as an eight week program of learning how to meditate and doing some Hatha yoga. So the question I guess here is can it hold up and reduce some of the aspects of psychopathology, the symptoms that are related to psychopathology that CBT was intended to target. And so CBT was developed by a guy named Aaron Beck, and he created this triad of things that are going on in people's world view on his rumination and sort of negative aspects of processing things over and over again in one's head. So a very sort of negative self-focus, so thinking about oneself in a negative framework was his first sort of aspect of his triad. And the other one was a negative world view towards the present and the future.

Actually all of this together creates his triad. So if you're thinking about yourself as negative, the world is negative, in the past everything sucked, and in the future everything is going to suck, that's basically what's happening when you have depression in sort of the Beck sort of model. You may agree or disagree with some of the things I say, but this is just a slice of my thinking on the board.

That's all you're really getting here. And so some of the things that you see in these types of people across most psychopathologies, emotional reactivity, people who react to emotional stressor in a way that's maladaptive, that's perseverative, that stays on all day, you can't let it go. You can avoid things, that's also a bad emotion regulation strategy, you just either perceptually avoid things, you don't even look at the things that sort of bother you, or you just choose not to deal with it when you see it.

Suppress emotion, it's a plunted response, also not good for you. So CBT, one year relapse rate is about 25%. So that's interesting, so people who get therapy that sort of focuses on these aspects of the world, in one year they will actually, only 25% of people will actually relapse back into depression or some form of psychopathology. Antidepressant use is 50%, so clearly drugs are not as effective, at least in that sort of context, as CBT.

It turns out that mindfulness, with some CBT, is also as effective in preventing relapse for people who have experienced at least three episodes of depression. So that sort of fits into that equation as well. So we're interested in things like bias, rumination, emotional reactivity and avoidance, and how do we target these things and measure them.

So that turns into stickies, and adds more to the story here. The question I guess here is augmentation, can we augment traditional forms of approaches like CBT and antidepressants with mindfulness as an augmentation strategy. So we're not just saying no drugs, but we're saying, okay, we'll give you some drugs, but we want to augment that strategy with something like mindfulness, and that may be more helpful.

Then you see some more little, I think we're moving along here, if we get them, yellow stickies here. Some of the concepts that I've been thinking about, I guess, for mindfulness, mind, clearly, is one of them, dullness, level of dullness is something we need to understand. Effort, that moves from positive to little, to negative meaning no effort. Mental defilements, things that cloud your mind and that produce problems, and negative thoughts. Distraction is also part of, these are actually parts of the, that came out of the Tanka painting of the Path to Stages of Insight.

I sort of just took the pieces out and put them on the yellow stickies. So they're all parts of the Path to Insight that sort of arise and you have to deal with them. And mental awareness, mindfulness just says, what's the outcome, truly, of a dull mind, a stabilized mind, and insight into one's mind.

And this little loop is sort of my way of describing that you are S, and as you go through this path, you sort of loop around in this spiral, and you come out with S prime, something a little different. And in the back here you see a Chinese, or a Kanji character, sort of what maybe mindfulness can be described as a Kanji character for presence, or a Kanji character for heart. Together they create mindfulness, presence of heart.

That may be a good way to think about it. Oh, and then you have a little Chitta Bhavana, a development of mind, spiritual cultivation, something else, some more sort of little, I guess, aspect of what we think about. What else? So, now we can talk about craving. We talk about craving, for example, for cigarettes, or even craving from the Buddhist point of view, is sort of an abstract concept. It's not so simple as just one area of the brain. And so if you look at all the literature out there, where craving is located in the brain, whether it's for cigarettes in terms of addiction, or craving in terms of even a loved one that you lose, so for a loss, there's different parts of the brain that are involved. So many parts of the brain that it's going to be really hard to try to localize. If you look here, this is the right hemisphere. These are all the areas of the brain with little hash marks that, from all the research that we looked at, have aspects of involvement in craving. So, this is just the right side, and the left side is down here. So there's a lot of things going on in terms of the brain, brain activity for craving.

So it's not so simple. Here you can see some of the things we've listed here. Oh, this actually, I guess I haven't looked at this in a while, because this, craving, rumination, self-regulation, emotion regulation, attention, these are actually some aspects of how we think the arrows, I guess, are working, that mindfulness may be working.

Reducing craving, reducing rumination, reducing avoidance and reactivity, increasing efficiency of attention, improving pro-social and ethical development, and maybe working at unconscious levels, heavy in learning, so sort of associative conditioning, facilitating

extinction and reconsolidation, decreasing resource allocation, so improving the efficiency of your whole brain. Let's see, what else? Okay, there's two more things on this board. If you can imagine, I think we've talked enough, but...

That's great. Two more things. We've got schizophrenia.

Oh, good. Let's go to schizophrenia. Okay, schizophrenia is right up here. So it turns out that we have multiple paradigms that we test schizophrenics on, and one of them is an emotional memory test. We give schizophrenics a bunch of words that could be thought-provoking or disturbing to a schizophrenic, and they show increases in all these brain areas, in the perineocampal areas, in the amygdala, in the insula, in the anterior prefrontal, dorsolateral prefrontal cortex.

And so what does it all mean? Well, you create a story out of it. I'm not going to go into the whole story, but essentially you have all these areas that sort of come online related to emotional memory, which makes sense, and we always compare these brain areas' activation to a normal subject. So increases in the insular activity may be some sort of emotional reactivity and an evaluative type of thing going on as well.

Decreased PCC, which may represent some sort of decreased representation of self or autobiographical nature of oneself. So we don't know exactly how it all pieces together. You sort of have to read the paper to get the sense of really how it all fits together, or else you just see a bunch of arrows.

But then there's another paradigm called... Read the paper? What paper? The paper will probably come out eventually on schizophrenia. We did a CBT intervention with them, actually, and so it turns out schizophrenics can respond to CBT.

Remember CBT? Yeah, yeah, yeah. Thank you. AT, that means anticipatory threat. We looked at how schizophrenics sort of anticipate threat. So it turns out that they have these really interesting increases in activity and visual association areas. What does that mean? It could be that they're really processing threat at a very sort of primary level of sensory processing. Much more activity going on there than a normal individual would, and that could also facilitate how one processes threat. If there's increased sensory processing, then that could also lead to increased interpretation of threat. And amygdala and hippocampus go up, too. That means that there's also increases in sort of autonomic reactivity to the threat.

And when they're in safety, when they know that they can be safe and that there's no threat, there's still increased processing and the visceral sort of activities going on and some of the precuneus activity as well. So what does that mean? I mean, we're not sure for sure, but there's definitely some extra processing going on that's probably unnecessary in trying to interpret what's happening. Okay, so there's one last thing here that we can really sort of focus on, I guess, for this board.

And I think it's probably this little board thing here. This is the default mode network. We hate the default mode network because it's confusing. Who hates it? I hate it because it represents what happens to your mind when it's wandering. And they call it stimulus-independent thought.

So what you do when you're thinking, when you're not really doing anything else. It's not goal-directed. It's very passive. But when it's passive, it's actually doing a lot of things.

It's self-reflecting about the past and the future. And Randy Buckner's group has sort of parsed apart the, or sort of used very highly advanced statistical modeling techniques to say that there's actually two subsystems within the default mode network. One could be the DMPC network, the dorsal medial prefrontal cortex network. That involves the TPJ, temporal parietal junction, also a very interesting area. Even if you're bored already, this is

an area that if you're stimulated, you would have an out-of-body experience. It's a very dissociative area.

So TPJ is actually quite interesting. And the lateral temporal cortex and the temporal pole. That's one network. And the other one would be the medial temporal lobe network, which involves ventral medial prefrontal cortex. And what's so cool about that area, it's evaluative in nature. In the sense that whenever you evaluate anything, the ventral medial prefrontal cortex comes online. But it also involves posterior inferior parietal lobe, hippocampal formation. So areas that are more related to memory, that autobiographical memory. And it turns out that that subsystem is more important for maybe thinking about oneself in the future. Whereas this network is more important for thinking about oneself in the present.

Whether it's oneself or other. Can you see these different networks when you look at the brain? Yeah, exactly. Activate separately. So that's what we're hoping to disambiguate them from what people are doing when they're doing nothing.

It's not a default mode. Everyone has different things that they think about when they're not thinking about anything. And meditators happen to have a problem thinking about or wandering really far. So that they're going to look very different from a lot of people.

Especially the people who ruminate. They look very different. There's also this area here, which actually is two nodes of the default mode network that are shared between these two subsystems. That's the anterior medial prefrontal cortex and the posterior cingulate cortex.

They just happen to be the connections for the whole default mode network. Okay, well thank you for coming. Thank you very much. That was great. Insert applause here.

## Density that is Unifying and Liberating ~ Shinzen Young

So we're talking about, okay, I said, I actually contrasted spacious versus dense. So for me, dense just means not spacious. Okay? Now here's where it gets, where you have to be really careful about words, and this is exactly the point you brought up, which I was wondering if anyone would bring up, actually.

So good for you. When you get into very highly concentrated states, you can get a sense that things are thickening or getting, quote, dense, but it's pleasant, and it's unifying and also liberating. That's contractive flow. That's another flavor of contractive flow, the feather-like paper. See expansion and contraction are technical terms.

Oh, what about technical terms? Okay, they have very specific meanings. Expansion and contraction in my system cover a huge range of sub-flavors. The lightness, thinness can be parsed as contractive. That jonic, sort of, quote, density could also be parsed as contractive, and they're both pleasant and liberating, just in different ways.

So that's what I have to say about that. Can you maybe compare and contrast the sense of heaviness and thickness, sort of, getting into a certain state versus the quote, unquote, badness, the thickness in a sensory language? Well, one obvious difference is that the quote, bad density hurts like hell, whereas the good density really feels good. That's an obvious difference. The reason for that difference, if I were to put it in words, is that the quote, bad density comes about from resisting the contractive force, whereas the quote, good density comes about through deeply surrendering to the contractive force.

There's not that subtle cellular rigidity against contraction. And the good density is actually halfway to global gone. And global gone is a big deal.

Global gone is the ninth jhana. That's sit there for a week and your breath stops. Except you don't die. I mean, your breath obviously doesn't completely stop, but you know. That's sort of waxy catatonic physiological trance. That's good, if you're fortunate enough to be moving in that direction. So that's what I have to say about that.



# Description of & Paths to Liberated Experience (Enlightenment) ~

## Shinzen Young

There are many ways to come to optimal happiness. You can carefully observe phenomena, break them down into finer and finer distinctions until you see the vibrant void that is their nature. That's sort of the observing and we use that a lot here. There's another strategy that can be successful which is more the nurture positive kind of thing. If you go all the way and develop an absorption level of concentration on positive image, talk and emotional body, you literally become that and your former identity passes away or at least is suspended for a while.

So I reckon that at least in theory, nurture positive could be a path to radical freedom and in fact, this is one of the major claims of Vajrayana practice in Tibet that these so-called deity yoga practices, they're not just concentration exercises. They are a component by component replacement of the inner seer, of the ordinary human seer feel with an alternate archetypal identity. The reason to do it is not to go insane, to think that you're a myth. The reason to do it is not shamanic possession.

It's a very different critter. It's done systematically in order to gain insight into the arbitrary nature of self-identification. So part of the influences on me in developing the way of teaching that I teach, well I'm very influenced by early Buddhism that took the divide and conquer strategy which is, okay, you break it down into pieces, sub-pieces and eventually you sort of know it to death and love it to death and you become free.

The it in this case is self. Okay, so that's what sort of leads to the focus in approach that I use. However the nurture positive working explicitly with image, talk, emotional body and in Vajrayana you also work with the physical body by making mudras. Working with those components, if you develop enough concentration, that's why they call it deity yoga. Yoga has many meanings.

One of the meanings is exercise. Another meaning of yoga is merging or becoming. So you merge with, you actually become the archetypal content that you create and as I say it's not to go insane and it's not to shamanically channel something, it's to gain insight into the arbitrary nature of self-identification. It's like playing with identity like with Lego toys.

It's like a tinker toy kit. You put one identity together, you take it apart and then you put another one together then you take it apart. Because it's not just one deity yoga, it's like a sequence of deities. I take that as a path that could in theory give you insight into no self.

So that's a whole way of working. Then there's sort of Zen which has a lot of different aspects to it which I won't go into but one, just one of the aspects in Zen is merging of inside and outside by pouring all your attention on the physical sight, physical sound, physicality of the body. There's only so much real estate in consciousness.

So if all the water sloshes out, that inner world contracts and vanishes and you merge, you become one with what was formerly out. So that's a way of working. Then there's a whole other approach which might be called the meditation of no meditation where you simply drop all efforting. That contrasts with the other ways of working, right? You can take the components of self and untangle them and see their vibrant void nature or you can merge with an archetype. The ordinary identity contracts, a mythic identity expands. Once again, you get insight into the arbitrary nature of self-identification.

Or you can merge out, see out, hear out, feel out. But those all require effort, particularly the deity yoga type practice. You're having to actually create intentionally the image, the talk, the body sensations and so forth. So very contrasting with that is, okay, drop all effort. So that's a do nothing kind of approach.

That works for some people well. A contrasting approach to all of the above, which I don't normally do as part of the system, but is definitely something that is powerful and something to look into if you're interested, is this whole sort of self-inquiry way of working. It's been discovered and rediscovered in different forms, different cultures, different times. It tends to be associated with some of the Hindu Advaita teachings and so forth. There's some great, great Advaita teachers online that have had really deep experience using this approach. So in Sanskrit, it's called Atma-Vichara. Vichara means to investigate and Atma means self.

But it also is another part of some of the Zen teachers. Who am I? What are you? In fact, that was the koan that my very first teacher gave me, Okamura Keishin Sensei. That was the last time when he and I were together in Japan. I was going back to the US and he said, okay, here's your koan. Who are you? What are you? It's like, okay, how do I work on this koan? Turn the light back on itself.

What do you mean? Bring them back to the source of the stream of consciousness. What's that mean? Just do it. So that was sort of the, I'm paraphrasing, but that was sort of the dialogue, okay.

There's not much you can, it's not an algorithm, okay. It's like groping. You're pushing back, pushing back, pushing back. A question, koan, who am I? Or where does thought come from? Or who sees? You can choose any language that you want. There's a lot of ways to formulate the question. The important thing to realize is this is koan work. This is not an intellectual question that you're going to say, oh, I am, and there's going to be a substantive, and now you have answered that question.

That's not what this is about. This is about each arising of self. You're trying to sort of metaphorically look over your shoulder and see where it came from.

As I say, it can be formulated in a lot of different words, but the method is the same, essentially the same or very similar. For some people that ends up very much related to that spacious thing that we were doing, where you start to get a sense that, okay, I'm the space all around looking in. That might be a stage that you pass through and you disidentify with the content of experience. A good teacher of this method won't let you mistake a fixated sense of witness as the true self, though. If it's at all fixated in space, like, okay, I'm over here kind of thing, well, now you need to look back a little further. So interestingly, it's not just in Hinduism and some of the Buddhist schools of Zen, but you actually find this method or something a little like this used in some of the Theravada traditions where they're trying to sort of like inquire, push it back, push it back.

I've seen some Theravada teachers that teach this way. And really interesting is some anonymous guy in the 15th century in England hit upon this. And I would almost be certain that he hit upon it without anyone pointing it out to him.

He just hit upon it, just discovered it. Do you know who I'm talking about? He's anonymous, but there's a work of literature he wrote. That's the Cloud of Unknowing, a classic in both Catholicism and Anglicanism, Episcopalian in other words. In there you can see him struggling to try to describe something that had no tradition in Europe.

But you could see it was really important for him. I should have prepared, showed you the section, but I'm paraphrasing, but it's something like keep beating away at the cloud of ignorance with the sword of love of God. Pushing back, pushing back to experience your existence, what lies behind you moment by moment. I'm paraphrasing, maybe I'll go find

the quote on the internet. But it's something to that effect. It's very obvious that he's struggling to describe something like a self-inquiry process.

Seems obvious to me anyway. I find it extraordinary that someone would have hit upon this independently and within the context of, that was pre-Reformation, so within the context of Catholicism basically. That's a whole other way of working. The approaches are, it's nice because the approaches contrast. So each person can find one or a combination of these that they can relate to. So there's a wide range of ways that you can go about. And personally, some people are sort of mono-spiritual, they do best with just one approach. But I find that a lot of people are bi or multi.

I certainly am. All those approaches to me seem like one approach. I would say that the closest thing within what I do to the self-inquiry way of working is just not gone. Can you see why? Can you see the parallelism? What's the question that self-inquiry asks? Where does it come from? What's the question that just not gone answers? It answers the question where does it go to? Because you're developing an appreciation for where things go to when they disappear. Now I know initially, so gone is defined very, very carefully within my system.

All or part of something abruptly subsides and you notice it. That's the definition of gone. And you might wonder, why set up such a weird definition? Why language it that way? Where something goes to when it disappears is the same place it comes from. Where A goes to when it vanishes is where B comes from in the next instant when it manifests.

So an inquiry method, you're sort of, okay, A has arisen, where did it come from? You're trying to sort of look back to the source of the stream. Turn the light back on itself. Turn consciousness back on itself.

Or a very common paradigm, be conscious of consciousness. So the gone is A just disappeared. And if you briefly look in that direction, you're going to see that that's where B is going to pop out of. And what is it? Well, it's emptiness. That's the tranquil side of the process. So that's one side of emptiness. And then the dynamic side of the process is how emptiness breaks apart. It happens to everyone hundreds of thousands of times a day.

It's so subtle, we just don't notice it by and large. But the nothing which is not extended in time and space, it breaks apart. And that happens with a kind of bouncy spontaneity.

Just happens. And there's a sense of space effortlessly spreading. And at the same time, there's a sense of space effortlessly collapsing. In terms of traditional Theravada formulations, they talk about Udayabhaya or rising passing. At some point, your awareness is dominated by this cyclic sense of there's just rising and passing.

And you're real detached from the content. It's just risings, passings, risings, passing. Some of it's pleasant, some of it's unpleasant, some of it makes sense, some of it doesn't make sense. But you have a sense that you're in contact with some primordial ordering principle that is a pre-human order. The order of nature. Human order is my body's comfortable and my mind's got answers. This pre-human order is what proceeds? Pre-energy entropy, maybe.

That's my guess. That's what causes things to praitiyasamutpadati, to fall up into existence. So a stage comes and typically you pass through this stage 10,000 times in a lifetime, but it just becomes clearer and clearer and clearer. With each new challenge level, you sort of have to go through the same thing again. That's one way to look at progress.

There's a lot of different ways to map progress. But one is, okay, can you be in an arising-passing situation with this level of pain in your leg? Okay, well how about the next level of pain in your leg? Well, how about ache in your heart? Well, how about, how about, how about, how about, how about? When you reach the point where it doesn't matter how

big or how complex or what the content is, but you can instantly be in an arising-passing situation, then you're doing pretty good. However, after the arising-passing thing, or on a continuum in a sense with that, is a sense of passing as it's arising.

No sooner is it arising, but it's already passing. This is described in the classic Visuddhimagga, the path of purification, written by Buddhaghosa. It's also described by the Anglican poet T.S. Eliot, in my beginning is my end.

That's how one of his lines opened. My beginning is my end. It's like already dying as soon as it's born. That is the, that's taking a temporal slice. As soon as it's arising, it's already passing. But spatially, that means as soon as it's spreading, it's already collapsing. Because remember, sensory events occupy time-space volumes. They last for a period of time, and they have width, depth, and height. Check it out.

We did it in the group process. Does your C-ear feel not have width, depth, and height? It does. So as soon as it's spreading in terms of width, depth, and height, it's already collapsing along all three of those dimensions. So that's sort of the extreme version of arising-passing, is like passing as it's arising, spreading effortlessly as it's collapsing effortlessly.

And in the folds of that vibrant dance of space are born the inner and outer C-ear feel that create the surrounding scene experience, and the I-have-a-self looking out at the surrounding scene experience. There's a metaphor from the Vijñānavāda school based on a snail. The snail's eyes, they belong to the same snail, but they come out on these two different stalks and then they can actually face each other. Consciousness comes from one formless source, and it's visual-auditory-somatic, but half of it seems out and the other half seems in, but it's really just consciousness looking at consciousness. So those sensory experiences arise in the vibrating folds in between this effortless spread and collapse of space. So that sense of space effortlessly spreading and collapsing, that's the dynamic side of emptiness. And then at some point that process sort of comes to an end, expansion and contraction cancel out, there's a flat line, but that's not the right metaphor.

It all collapses back down to the next gone. So sometimes people like to talk about non-dual. I mentioned that term a few minutes ago, advaita, non-dual. So non-dual is another way to say one, or it's another way to say healing a wound, healing an alienation, healing a cleft that separates.

So there's a lot of healings that have to take place. One is the seeming separation of inside and outside. If you were listening carefully to what I said, you should have an idea of how that duality can be transcended.

And to transcend the duality of inside and outside, that's no small thing. What are some of the ways? Well, I actually mentioned a few of them. One is you can allow out to expand while in contracts. In other words, the see out, hear out, feel out of the surrounding scene, you pour all your attention on that. So much so that the see and hear and feel in of the reactive self contracts to nothing. And then your identity just goes out and inhabits what was formerly other.

That's one way to go about it. Another way to go about it is the outer scene arises and there's a reactive self. It also arises. However, there's so much habitual concentration, clarity and equanimity in those circuits that both the outer scene and the inner self arise as a wave form. And so the two waves completely interpenetrate. And there is a oneness of inside and outside as a kind of unified dance of energy.

That's another way that you can have a you can break down the duality between inside and outside. One of the major paradigms of enlightenment in world mysticism is the oneness. In Taoist terms, it tends to be oneness of inside and outside. In theistic religions, it tends to be oneness of the soul with God.

How do you experience oneness of the soul with God? Well, how about experiencing yourself arising in between the two sides of God moment by moment? That would do the trick. Especially if it's your screwed up self. That would be really good. To experience your screwed up self being loved into existence by the dance of space moment by moment. It's pretty good. Might help you be a little more loving of your screwed up self. To achieve a sense of oneness of inside and outside is admirable. But I would say that it's not the deepest experience of non-dual. The deepest experience of non-dual comes about when the duality or separation between the one nothing and the ten trillion somethings, when that separation is healed. That's real non-dual awareness.

What in the world is he talking about? So the one nothing that is the source, that's what gone points to. That's also what you see when you're successful in self-inquiry. When you see where you come from.

See where you go to. That's the one nothing. Then there's the ten trillion somethings of self and world. Another way to put it is emptiness and form. So the Heart Sutra says, form is emptiness, emptiness is form.

Now it's very interesting. They put it both ways. Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. That is the entire path viewed from one point of view. That's only one point of view, but that's the entire path right there.

The first half of the path is form is emptiness. That's dissolution. That's loving and knowing form to death.

Within the Jewish meditation tradition it's called B'TUL HAYESH, the annihilation of the somethings. Don't be afraid of it. Don't be afraid to just sit there and totally let go of the ordinary ordering principle. The ordinary human ordering principle, which I reiterate, what did I say the human ordering principle is? Body is comfortable and mind has answers. Now I'm not saying that there's anything wrong with the normal human ordering principle. In fact we're humans. Maybe that's what we need, but we also need a larger context, a pre-human ordering, the source of the human ordering, presumably. So don't be afraid to just let it all collapse into what seems to be chaos. Because what's interesting is what seems to be random is in fact what causes order to arise, entropy. So you sort of surrender to that and you let the somethingness just be torn apart. And you throw caution to the wind and for a period of time abandon totally the ordinary ordering principle.

Doesn't matter if the body's comfortable or not. Doesn't matter if my mind is confused or not. Annihilation of the somethingness. And what will happen is it'll all become rising, passing, arising, passing, and then it will just be passing, passing. And then you will begin to see how that nothing molds each moment. And each moment is one of the ten trillion somethings that I'm alluding to.

The ten trillion somethings of self and world. This is happening here. I'm experiencing this here. My mind's doing this. My body's doing this. They're doing that.

We're over here. It's ten trillion somethings that constitute a life. How can we connect, have an unbroken, a non-dual link between the one nothing over here and the ten trillion somethings? Well, this is about the deepest principle that I am personally aware of in practice. What the umbilical cord, the thing that allows for a smooth and continuous transform from the one nothing to one of the ten trillion somethings back to the one nothing. What connects is the two doings. The two doings are the two sides of emptiness.

Space effortlessly spreading and collapsing. They are the two sides of zero. And in the folds is, arises one of the ten trillion somethings. And whatever it is, a thought, a body sensation, a sight, a sound, whatever it is, it's always embraced from without and within by the two doings. So it, the ordinary experience, is touched by the two doings. But the two doings are in fact the two sides of the one nothing.

And that allows you to have an experience thousands and thousands of times a day of this miraculous arising of something from nothing. Form is emptiness. That's the path of dissolution. Emptiness is form. If you are heroic enough to do that, you get to live the rest of your life seeing each sensory event as this kind of miracle that arises sitting on the totality of the universe.

It seems like you're participating in that process. And in the Hebrew that's called Bri'ah Yesh Me'ayim. The continuing, continuous creation of yesh, things, me, from, ayim, the divine nothingness. That's a spontaneous bouncy process. And because of that, you look upon each thing as sort of sharing your womb. And in the Jewish tradition, at least the Jewish mystical tradition, it is said that through that participation comes about something called tikkun olam, the mending of the world. Happy eid! .

## Developing the "Taste of Purification" ~ Shinzen Young

Purification We talk a lot about purification on this path and especially I hear you talk about it as one of the benefits or events that happen with this practice. And I'll speak to my own experience, but purification isn't always pretty.

And sometimes you can be blindsided with lots of emotion or disconcerting internal talk. Could you just speak to this process of working with purification and or how it can arise? What are the different forms of purification that we could experience in terms of working with that as its own phenomenon? Sometimes people confuse the purification and might think that's a new problem. When one practices, as time goes on, one develops a kind of sensitivity to something that I call purification. In fact, I would say that one of the major watersheds in a person's practice is when they start to develop the taste of purification where they can actually sense that purification has happened.

So what do we mean by purification? It's a perception that because of the way that I'm experiencing this moment with high concentration, sensory clarity, and especially equanimity, because of the way I'm experiencing this moment, things that have been getting in the way from the past are getting worked through. And you actually sense that that is happening. Now, how do you sense that? That's hard to put into words.

You just develop a... it's like wine tasting. Tasters can detect all sorts of subtleties in flavor, bouquet, finish, tannins, what have you.

They just develop the palate to detect stuff that the average person doesn't detect. At some point, every meditator who stays with the process develops this sense that because of how I'm experiencing the present, the past is being worked through. Like I say, I can't put into words how you know it's happening, but you just do. You also know that because of that, every moment in the future is going to be better for you. So that's a huge watershed in practice, because before that happens, your preoccupation with regards to meditation is to have certain experiences while you meditate. You want to be concentrated, you want to be calm, you want to have altered states, you want to have whatever you want to have. Feel good, have something interesting and entertaining or unusual happen. When people start their practice, that's how they evaluate their practice. It's like, oh, something good or interesting or unusual happened, so that was a good meditation. At some point, if you stay with it, you develop this sensitivity for the purification. And then your motivations shift.

You're not interested in getting to any particular state. You're interested in setting the stage for nature to optimize purification. You set the stage and let time pass, and the purification is taking place, and you can taste it. And because you can taste it, you don't mind if you're in a lot of pain in your body, you don't mind if there's a lot of emotions in your body, you don't mind if there's a lot of confusion in your mind.

Because, although by all ordinary ways of thinking, pain in the body, uncomfortable emotions in the body, confusion in the mind, that's like the last thing in the world anybody would ever want. But if you can taste the purification while that's going on, so you know the past is getting worked through, and the future, every moment of the future will be better for me because of how I'm experiencing this present moment, uncomfortable though it is. Once that taste of purification kicks in, then you start to grow exponentially.

The rate of growth takes off in a hockey stick mode. When you're saying taste of purification, it's making it sound like, ah, I'm developing a taste. You know, when someone's drinking wine, they know they're drinking wine. But to know the interpretation of if that is purification, if it isn't purification, and or, my relationship to that is that you said, oh, I don't mind if I'm in pain, I don't mind.

When you say develop a taste, do you mean where that starts to become a pleasant experience? I would say that whenever a person in the present moment brings a quality of concentration, clarity, and equanimity to their experience, or even one or two of those, at any level whatsoever, purification is happening whether they're aware of it or not. Whether they're aware of it or not, it is happening. But after long practice, you know it's happening. But I cannot describe to you how you know. It's another dimension of experience.

You sense it. Does knowing help the process? The knowing is what makes the process snowball. That's what gives the exponential growth. Because the fact, in other words, you're getting a reward. I wouldn't exactly say the reward is pleasure. It's another kind of reward. How you will typically react with pleasure when you taste purification, the taste itself is not the taste of pleasure.

It's its own dimension. It's just one of those things you have to experience by practicing. But once that happens, then no matter how horrific an experience may be, you're getting rewarded in that experience. Not necessarily rewarded by pleasure, but rewarded by this something else, this taste of purification. So that the more you taste it, the more you're willing to have equanimity.

The more you're willing to have equanimity, the more you taste it. That's called a positive feedback loop. And your practice just goes off on a hockey stick curve. Before that, it tends to be linear and rather subtle.

Once the taste of purification develops, you've got this positive feedback loop and it just goes. And that's how you make that journey of a million miles in just a few years. You only walked 10 miles in the first year. But what you don't realize is the longer you walk, the faster you walk. And the taste of purification is the main thing that makes that happen.



## DIGGING HOLES ~ Shinzen Young

We could say, you know what, my path to enlightenment is going to be see it. That's it. Theoretically, you could do that.

Assuming you have had enough image activity to warrant that. And then it's all about seeing. It's about having a complete experience of seeing. So complete that it bores a hole through the time-space continuum.

And the whole field just gets sucked into that nirvanic black hole through seeing alone. Could you do that in theory? Yes. Could you do that with any of these atoms in theory? Yes.

Could you do that with any of the modalities or any of the themes? Yes, you could. Because remember appreciation, which is just my poetic way of saying experience mindfully. Appreciation and experience mindfully is experience with concentration, clarity, and equanimity. So quick way of saying all of that, appreciation taken to its limit beyond a certain threshold of skill, appreciation becomes transcendence. It points to the formless. So that is to say that although we have the possibility of working at using this sort of microscope with three magnification pieces, atoms, systems, everything, that is not to say you have to do that.

It's just to say that a person could do that. Now you probably heard the expression, oh, well, you shouldn't dig a whole lot of holes. You should just dig one deep hole. Well, for some people that's probably true. You should just have one thing and just stick with that, but not inevitably. And I would rather use a different metaphor than the lot of shallow holes, which is pejorative. I would say you can learn a couple of ways. One way is yeah, okay, dig all the way down from the form to the formless, one hole. But you're still going to have to deal with all the rest of the stuff. It gets dealt with by getting sucked down that hole, but there's still that process. Technique-wise you never do anything but this, but still all this stuff has to be dealt with through that technique. Nirvana means that the whole, you literally fold up the board. The game's over for a while anyway. You fold up the board and it goes into the closet. Oh, don't worry, it'll come out again.

I didn't mention that. So instead of the pejorative of, oh, you're digging a lot of shallow holes, let's use a different metaphor. You've got a back hole and you're just clearing the whole field to a certain level, and then you clear the whole field to another level until when you finally get to the bottom, then there's nowhere in the surface that isn't now contacting the bottom. So just another way to think about the working. Our strategies to work. So what strategy should you use? What's fun and interesting and productive for you is which strategy to use.

## Direct Awakening Exercise ~ LOCH KELLY with Stephanie Nash

Well, each exercise kind of takes you directly. So let's give me an example. Let's just have an example of one of these exercises, one of them, or one of the ones where you use something physical.

Not the thought ones. Okay. All right.

All right. So here's, yeah. So one simple way of getting this feeling of shifting your awareness out of the identification with your mind, which creates this little self-looping identity, is to have awareness just, again, I'm talking to you, the awareness. I'm talking to you, the awareness, and the awake awareness. So if you think, well, how am I going to unhook awareness from thought? I've never done that. I don't know if I can do that.

That is correct. You cannot do it. But awareness can do it.

So you just have to be, sometimes I call it the Columbo approach. It's like, yeah. Oh, by the way, before I leave, I just unhook awareness and have it drop. By the way, as an aside.

As an aside, just without thinking about it. Do that, and then. And then you'll be awake.

So we'll see you next time. All right. All right. All right. All right. All right.

All right. So just simply have awareness, which is identified or attached to thought. Simply unhook and step back, and then see what it feels like if awareness, which is the center of knowing, drops and knows your smile from within your smile, knows your jaw from within your jaw, without looking up to thought and without stretching or looking down from thought, have awareness that knows directly drop into your throat, know your throat from within, and then feel awareness drop below your neck and feel your upper torso or come into your heart space. And you can smile and breathe and just feel what it's like to directly perceive your body from within without orienting to thought and without going to sleep. This field is a direct awareness-based, embodied, open-hearted, non-thought-based knowing, which is kind of alert. It's aware of space, it's aware of aliveness, and it's aware of awareness, which is aware by itself.

Just feel that relief and notice this new, non-conceptual, embodied way of shifting into another dimension of your consciousness. See what's absent, what was there, and then see the qualities of presence that start to kind of shimmer. What do you notice? What I love about that is not checking up. You say looking up? Yeah, not looking up. I'm not looking up and I'm not down here going, oh look, that's happening there. I'm not this witness watching this, which is what we do a lot. Like okay, I feel my knee and now I'm labeling here.

But you literally talk about being there. And for me that's like juicy. It's like, oh, it's nice. It's full, it's nice, it's warm, there's love. And the not looking up, looking down is free, because you realize it's kind of like the Wizard of Oz is behind there trying to move all the gears to make that thing work. And it's like he's not there anymore. And so you can just allow it to be something without all the, well, you know, stuff there and that's nice. And then just take us out.

Yeah, so take us out. So then interestingly, there's a bunch of different ways, kind of like you taught, I'm aware of different learning types. So some people are kinesthetic, some people are emotional, some people are more mental, some people are visual, some people are auditory.

So I use different doors for, and some people were like, oh, that one was really good and that one didn't work so well. But by the time we do short little practices. And does

everything, something's going to start a movement. Something's starting to happen and they get to the same place. And then interestingly, they use their own words to describe it.

And they don't need to use the vocabulary that I'm starting with. And that's the style of his teaching. He'll kind of guide you to an experience. And then literally, rather than talking about it, he has everyone go around the room and report their words. And what's nice always about that is, one, as a student, you get to hear what everyone else is doing.

Not that I'll have some of that or what he is, but it helps open your idea to other things that can be, or maybe it was words you hadn't thought to describe it from your own experience. As the teacher sitting there, I was going, way to go. You know, like, you hear that? You hear all that? So good, it's so good. I was like, there's popcorn happening in this room. And throughout the workshop, you'd hear someone at the beginning going, where is what? You'd hear them at the beginning and at the end, there were a couple people at the end going, oh, and you get these ahas. And as a teacher, I was high-fiving him and going, that is so cool. Because as a teacher, the mudita, you get this joy at that. Because you know they walked out the door with something that's going to shift their life in a good way.

And they're giving them tools to be able to do it themselves. So there's like, these short practices and I've written this book about it. Oh yeah, your book.

I almost forgot. There's a book. You want a book on this? There's a book on this. What's your book called? It's a book on this. Shift Into Freedom. It's called Science and Practice of Open-Hearted Awareness.

All right, got that. Shift Into Freedom. And then currently there's an audio. And it's a very perfect title for what this is too.

It is exactly a shift into freedom. And there's an audio? Yeah, and the audio currently is the audio of the practices, not the audio of the book. Oh, you didn't want to sit there for 12 hours and read your book? I ended up doing that and that will come out.

Oh, okay. I always like to hear the teacher, like I want to hear Pema Chodron read her book. I want to hear the word, I don't want the actor they hired. I want to hear you describe it, because you also get that kind of, the energy of how it comes in. So when you say it's the audio of just the practices. So the audio of the practices is kind of the teaching style, is like the teacher, it's like I'm introducing the students to their own inner teacher. And when I'm showing or pointing them to look within, it's not look up here, but look back within you. And then once you discover this non-conceptual awareness, by being able to speak from there, it's really not even about the words. It's about speaking from non-conceptual heart mind, so that you start to rewire functioning and living from this new way of knowing and being, so that you can start to make it a normal thing.

And then in the middle of your life, you can start to just walk down the street, go to work, have relationships, hang out, have fun. From a continuous awakening, you know, losing it. And part of the small glimpses is, of course, initially, you're going to recognize, realize and lose it, and then the practice is re-recognize. So training to re-recognize and return and remain and then speak and walk and talk from there and then lose it. And then no big surprise, just re-recognize. And then again, and the training can be done with these small glimpses in the midst of your day.

## EARTHQUAKE ~ Shinzen Young

Now that sounds like the wealth of the earth, meaning that it could become a major turning point in the history of our species. We're having an earthquake.

Is that what that is? Yeah. It's my first earthquake. I've been waiting 14 years. Well, I hope you weren't disappointed. That ain't much of an earthquake, baby. We have some entertainment up here in Palos Verdes just for y'all for tonight.

Thank you. They seem to happen on Friday nights like this. Our second one in about two months on a Friday night, just about this time. Oh no, that's great. We were enjoying it.

Chell is having a complete experience. What can I say? We could do a lot better than that. Yeah, we don't get them on the East Coast very much, it's true. The earthquake, yes. What to do when the earthquake comes. Well, there's a Zen koan.

Anyone care to answer? What to do when the earthquake comes. That's the explanation. Or the manifestation. My explanation would be you can't shake the shaking. But permanence, complete experience, actually does feel like an earthquake. That earthquake was on cue for me.

At least I'm going to interpret it that way. I was just about to say that when you have a completed experience, it feels like an earthquake. It shakes heaven and earth because it is the authentic person without a fixed position. I wasn't going to relate it to an earthquake.

But it is a reasonable comparison and one, in fact, that I have made numerous times in the past. One of the times when I knew that this practice was really doing something industrial strength for me was when we had the center, some of you were around back that far, on Eldon Avenue, remember, in Koreatown. One morning I had to go in to do something that I'd forgotten. I had gotten in my car and then I said, oh, I forgot to do that. I ran into the center and I left the keys in the car. It's downtown, right? And sure enough, like two minutes later I came out, the car is gone.

And what was that experience? I'm remembering it because at the time it was just like an earthquake. That's all. There was no thought, there was no emotion as an object. It was so complete that it was just space rocking. It was just like that last penultimate scene in the first Matrix when... What's the name of the character? Neo.

Neo, yeah, Neo realizes who he is, right? And the whole frame of the movie sort of goes like that. I mean, that's really what it was like. It wasn't just my mind and my body, it was the sight and sound, everything. The whole frame of the self and scene was just this wave. And then it was just like being massaged. And then I just went in, called the cops, and that was that, you know, reported it.

That was dramatic. That was a complete experience of having your car swiped in downtown L.A. The gangbangers that took it were so stupid, they put their graffiti in it. And the cops busted them. I eventually got the car back. Left the graffiti just for the cultural.

## EMPOWERING (or NOT) DISTINCTIONS & UNIFICATIONS ~

Shinzen Young

I guess for me the trick would be like, most of the time, the problem is lack of sensory clarity, so most of the time the practice is separating.

But there are those huge windows that open. Where the practice is unified. Yes. And that's the dialectic of this practice. It's about, that's one of the balance aspects.

It's a dynamic balance. There's a place, there's a whole list of empowering distinctions. There's a whole list of empowering unifications. And there's a whole list of disempowering distinctions.

And there are even disempowering unifications. Yeah, that's exactly, I get that, I totally get that. If you totally get that, you got a lot.

You got, your money's worth. That's the beauty of it. Yeah, what's an example of a disempowering, what are some examples of disempowering unifications? Enmeshment. Say what? Enmeshment.

Enmeshment. I mean, isn't that how we wrote off the book? Coda, enmeshment, weak ego structure, what are they, borderline issues. And last but not least, identification with the aggressor, Patti Hurst syndrome. Codependency.

Yeah. So, there's this whole list of disempowering unifications, but there's also the flip side of all of the above is empowering unification. And then there's disempowering distinctions, of which the main one is.

My identity stops with my skin. That's the biggest disempowering distinction. Distinction between inside and outside. And then the distinction between material and spiritual, between form and emptiness. Those are all disempowering distinctions. So the name of the game is, or the bad news is, that most human beings are involved in disempowering distinctions and disempowering unifications. The good news is that any human being who chooses to can flip it and with a lot of study and practice come to understand empowering distinctions and empowering unifications. So the focus in technique is interesting, for example. I usually present it to you as a deconstructive technique, but it's actually also a restorative technique. People that have these, sometimes it's called borderline or boundary problem in the sense that they can't remember who they are when they're in the presence of the looming other.

Okay, there's this diagnosis, right? And I've had people that had like official psychiatric diagnosis of that weak ego structure thing and the description that they gave and the description from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual was, you know, in the presence of other people, the looming other, they just can't keep contact with who they are. Well guess what? The focus in technique will allow you to do that. And that's what I used. Actually this woman had had a lifelong, big time diagnosis, you know, from a professional psychiatrist. And what I did is I just had her, I put just a little different spin on the focus in. Instead of using it to untangle the I am-ness, I had her use it to keep in contact with the fact that she does have an internal life even in the presence of the looming other. And it's very tangible. And the clarity allowed her to know she had mental image, mental talk, and emotional body sensations even when the looming other was present.

And the looming other was any other human when it started. And so that's the sensory clarity. What's the concentration piece is to not lose contact with that content in the presence of the looming other. It's just training.

Just training. So that's now using the focus in, which in some ways could be thought of as breaking down the small self. But just put a little different spin on it, it's actually empowering the ability to not lose yourself when you need to have a distinction between inside and outside. So you've probably heard this expression, you have to have an ego before you can let go of the ego, et cetera, et cetera. Well, I'm not sure that I would exactly formulate it that way, but I would say that there is a dialectical process.

And I drew a picture of it. So anyway, you know who first came up with that expression about you have to have an ego before you can let go of it? That was Jack Engler, who is both a mindfulness teacher and at one time was the head of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, which tells us something about the age in which we're living. So I told Jack this story about the woman with the whatever, and he actually immediately invited me to do grand rounds at Harvard Medical School based on that whole paradigm. I ended up, wasn't able to go, but it's just historically interesting.

## Focus Out with Fascination ~Stephanie Nash

So, two times ago, I focused on flow.

So what I had everybody do was tune into the moving, changing nature of everything with acceptance. And it can be the moving, changing nature of anything visual, which could be we watch leaves moving and just tuned into the movement as opposed to that's a leaf, that's a branch. And there might be different frequencies of movement. The branch might move like this while the leaves move like this. We just tune into that movement. Let the movement be a visual massage. I talked about how doing this driving around LA can be wonderful. There's traffic, people, right? There's movement happening. And you can just allow that. And it doesn't keep you, you don't start driving into walls.

You're still present. But it can create a kind of an acceptance and a massage in the visual field. You can do it with sounds. Sounds are just moving and coming and going and expanding and contracting.

You know, there can be just different movement of sounds. And that's seeing and hearing out in the outside world. Seeing hearing in, you can apply that movement of sound and they come and go to the talk in your head. Oh, it's a sound coming and going and getting louder and softer.

It's just movement. You can do it closing your eyes with images. When we see, we tend to, I have a blank place where we rest visually. You just close your eyes and it might be just patches of lightness and darkness. And for a lot of people, it's like a lava lamp.

It's got a glob here and it comes and goes. You can just watch that movement of it and let that be a visual massage. Or if images come in, for most people it's not like, hi, there's a square picture frame. It's usually a vague, hazy, subtle thing or maybe part of an image comes and goes out or something reminds you of something. And just let that movement of images coming in and out be a visual massage. And in the body, you can work with sensations moving around. Breath is an ultimate movement to come in and go out. There's how many different kinds of breath meditation I personally have taught, I don't know, 10, 12 different ways of looking at the breath.

But one way I did was just noticing the movement, the expanding, the contracting, maybe the movement of air coming through the nose, maybe emotions coming in and out. A sound happens and ooh, you know, birds happen and I feel a little movement of delight in my body or a dog barks and I feel, oh, maybe a little tension and release there or something. So that we just turn into the movement nature and everybody thought, oh, that's cool, that's fun. And it makes us softer and I feel like I've really meditated, you know. Then the next week I went, okay, now we're going to look at stillness.

We're going to look at space and rest. I tuned everyone into the same visual thing when you close your eyes. Kind of focusing on movement, even though movement's there, you're not watching movement.

It's a place to park. We even worked with just a sense of space around you, a space around things to allow things to happen inside a bigger space. The real thing that was an eye opener for a lot of people was auditory, listening to silence even though sound is present. So we open out to the world of sound and there might be sound there, sound there, but what if we listen in a direction there is no sound? Ah, tuning into that space and then maybe even listening to the silence beyond sound.

Ah, huge space, very expansive focus and everybody felt like, oh, we've really meditated now. You know, that's different. That's different than how we get through life. So we had

one week of flow and then one week of rest and space. So today I thought, let's celebrate solidity.

And this is also, if you've got emails, I ended up putting it as the theme. You've heard of the power of now, right? Let's be present. Well, there's a way to tune in to see and you'll notice everything I do is visual, auditory, somatic. We have five senses plus our thought process. Our five senses plus our thought process are what tell us who we are, when, where, why, how we feel about it, what we want to do, what happened and whether that was good or bad and what all our judgments are and all our suffering comes in in these five senses plus our thought process. And you could say thoughts and feelings, but the feelings will be in the body. And you can divide all of that into three because I like three.

Trinity is also one of the things about three. My meditation teacher, Shinzen Young, came up with this though. It's his brilliance and his ingredients I cook with and send always appreciation and gratitude to teachers, always, always, always.

I come from teachers and thank you. But he divides it all into visual, auditory, somatic. So your entire sensory experience, your thoughts, visual, I see images, I hear internal talk. So there's visual, auditory to thoughts.

Things are in the body and there might be a thought component, but that's visual. So see, hear, feel. We either see out the world, we see into our mind. We hear out the sounds, we hear in to the talk. Feel out and feel in. Feel in will be emotions. Then we're doing subjective versus objective.

Subjective would be emotional sensations. I have fear in my chest. You know when you want to cry sometimes and you try to choke it down, the tongue kind of gets engaged here and we've even got terms like cat got my tongue and I got a lump in my throat.

I was all choked up. You know, and it gets, or teary feeling behind the eyes or a wave of love, of warmth we might feel in the chest. Or you get embarrassed, there might be a flush you feel up in your face. Usually it's the front part of the torso, maybe into the face, but some people get anger down the back of their neck, right? The hair stood up on the back of my neck.

We've got that phrase. It broke my heart, right? We have all sorts of ways in which emotions play in the body and we don't, we might say my heart or I couldn't stomach that or you know, we'll point to parts of the body, but it's usually kind of, it, they're vague. It's kind of another dimension of feeling in the body.

We can't say that was this organ. It kind of spreads and takes a certain area of the body and it's a kind of sensation just like earlier today in the meditation. I had you tune into a particular flavor sensation. The flavor or flavors of letting go release. There are other sensations.

You could still feel your butt on the cushion, but we were tuning into letting go. While in the same way, feel in are certain sensations that are emotional in nature. And if you're not sure, say they're not. But if you think they are, if you think, ah, every time I go, damn it, why did he do that? And I feel this clench in here. We'll call that emotional in nature.

Okay. And so you start to get to know where anger happens in your body, where fear, anger, fear, sadness, shame. Those are the big four. People suffer and kill themselves over those all the time. So and then we have good ones, love, joy, peace, gratitude, and they tend to be subtler. The louder ones tend to, hey, I'm here, but just like restless that we tuned into, that's a subtle thing that's available at any given moment. But no, I'm not tuning into that. I'm tuning into that guy cut me off, you know, or the talk, right? So you can, as a choice, learn to tune into these subtle. It's like tuning in a fainter radio station, but after a while, it's not so subtle.



The more you tune into it, the bigger it gets. You know that way. You literally develop new neural pathways in the brain. I grew up in the woods, so I talk about taking a path in the woods, and I didn't like taking the regular trail. I'd always like to take a different trail. That to me was fun. I used to try to get lost. I thought that was so exciting.

That moment when I'm like, I don't know where I am, because I grew up in a small town where everyone knew you since you were born and just anything unknown was thrilling. And I do a new path, and then pretty soon I take that new path every day, and that's my path, and all the animals would take that path, and then pretty soon the old one grows over, right? And then pretty soon that's the main path. Well, now I've got to try another one. But I've talked with neurologists and brain researchers, and at Harvard, even the guys who studied my brain when I was there, and they say what I describe as those paths in the woods, I'm telling people that's a way to create new paths, and they have told me that is exactly what happens in your brain. That every time you have that thought, and this happens, oh, the brain goes, there's a pathway. So the next time that thought happens, there's a higher probability you're going to have that same response because it knows that path.

Not because that was the best one, not because that's the one that feels good. And then we have a tendency to associate familiar with what we like, and those are two different things. And I learned that real big at Duke when we worked with battered housewives who would rather get hit than go to something they didn't know. And they even sometimes let their children get hit rather than go to something they didn't know because there was a life or death fear of leaving that isn't rational.

It has to do with us associating familiar with good. So in that way today, I'm going to be having you, now you're going, oh, this is going to be scary. So today I'm going to have you tune into something you do all the time. See here, feel out. Sight, you see all the time. Hear, you hear sounds all the time. Feel in the body, oh, I didn't do feel out in the body. Feel in where emotions, feel out is every other sensation. Every objective sensation that is not emotional. But on the cushion is feel out.

Feel your tongue in your mouth, that's feel out. It's objective. There's no drama.

There's no emotion in it. The breath is one of the reasons we use breath in meditation. For some people, 30% of people, when you say focus on your breath, they attempt to control it.

They can't not. And so it's an unpleasant experience for them. But people who teach breath meditation don't always factor that.

That can be an issue. But you feel your hands. You can feel your feet on the floor, clothes on your skin, temperature, humidity of air on your skin. There's lots of touch sensations that are not emotional in nature that would be feel out.

So today, to be here now, our dramas tend to be where? See and hear and feel in, right? Thoughts and feelings. Ah, I remember that. This happened and I play it over and over again. We replay our traumas. We traumatize ourselves over and over again, right? Where's a safe place to go? Well, we can go to our happy flow place. We did that. We can go to our happy rest place.

Everybody wants to go to a happy place. We can actually ground ourselves in the truth and the reality of allowing all of our attention to soak into, penetrate, explore what we're seeing. Now see, hear, feel. We do it all the time. But what we tend to do is see and hear in general. We tend to let it all be one thing. We don't tend to separate out see from hear from feel.

It's just all this stuff happening. And we tend to be drawn to an arising, pleasant or unpleasant, a loud sound. And that the only time we separate hear from see would be like music, art, and seeing the art. We'll let the art feel it. But then we'll have an emotional

sensation to the art or something else. But we're not separating necessarily, deliberately separating the see out from it.

In fact, the internal talk may be going wild while we're seeing the art. What does he mean? But to just focus in on the see, just focus in on the hear, just focus in on the feel. Now when you do this, especially with see out, hear out, feel out, it doesn't mean that if I'm just focusing on the see, I have stopped feeling and I have no ability to hear or sounds have all stopped.

It doesn't mean that at all. It means I am selectively attending. I have so much real estate in my consciousness and I am filling it, choosing meditation, I'm choosing to fill my awareness with the rest of my body. I'm choosing to fill my awareness with the visual experience. So it's a choice to do it and at first it may seem effortful. Well normally I just see and hear and feel.

You're making me just go there and just go there and just go there. Or you might say, I have trouble concentrating. I want to develop my concentration.

Well my answer to that, this is my yellow brick road, is fascination. I guided, I think the week before last week, I think I did a 45 minute meditation on flow. I think I was. And last week was probably 35. But I did a 45 minute meditation. And everyone went, I didn't think that was 45 minutes.

I was like, 20 minutes. And I said, okay, because that means you were in a state of high concentration. What's that mean? It means you were there and you weren't wandering off somewhere.

You were there. Why were you there? Well I happen to think it's fascinating. So I share that fascination. It's like the fascination and I always say like a four year old with a ladybug.

You know, we're four that can't, in fact you cannot take a three or four year old and walk across, if this room were grass and a grass yard, you couldn't go from there to here in five minutes with a three or four year old because there'd just be too many interesting things to see. Whoa, look at that. That is so cool. Look at that ladybug.

It just opened its wings. Oh my goodness. And I work with people in chronic and acute pain. You can look at your pain that way. You can look at your emotions.

Oh my God, I have terror here. Okay, where do you feel it? Where are the boundaries? Is there movement? Is it the same in the middle or in the outside? No one's ever asked anybody these questions. I don't know. Well, maybe. Actually, I think it's a good question. I think it's a good question. I think it's a good question. I think it's a good question. I think it's a good question.

I think it's a good question. When you start exploring it, it is friggin' fascinating. And guess what? The suffering's gone. You're watching the pain. Usually as soon as we start watching it and stuff, often it turns into an energy. It often presents its flow nature. And pretty soon the suffering's gone. But fascination, this childlike fascination to explore with curiosity, with kind of an openness, that to me isn't where we're going.

That's the yellow brick road to getting there. And so people who say, I can't concentrate, that fascination creates concentration. Because everybody who did that 45 minutes wasn't able to sit at home for 45 minutes without their attention wandering. They were fascinated.

They were interested. It rivets your attention. When you're doing something you really like, you go at it and hours go by and you're not aware of it, right? You like it. So I say, get fascinated. You can practice getting fascinated. That 45 minute meditation, some people went, oh my goodness, I had no idea there was this and they went there and then this.

Or last week with the rest, the whole notion of tuning into silence, even though sound was there, was like wow to people. And then we went there and then, so we filled one 45 minute meditation with all these things to explore and another just with flow. And then another 35 minute meditation filled with just places to rest and park and space. Every single moment of all those meditations is available in every moment. Every friggin' moment of your sensory experience is friggin' fascinating.

There's so much to soak into. You just got to shift to that four year old and what I'm trying to supply is saying, it's like saying, have you ever wiggled your ear or a little tone? No one ever tried it. No one ever said, have you ever done that? It wasn't until my meditation teacher said, well what if you just look at that? What if you separate this experience? It didn't occur to me to separate it. I thought my emotions were part of the experience and I thought what I thought was the truth. I thought that voice in the head was me. I thought that was my narration of my life. The idea that the voice in my head wasn't me, I was just like, whoa. It's not who's driving the car, it's what's on the radio and I can turn it down or turn it off or change the channel or if the knob is stuck I can just treat it as background sound like the water or traffic or birds. Never occurred to me. So I was lucky to get a teacher to say, hey look, here's some other ways you can tune into that.

That kind of makes life better, doesn't it? All this richness. And the question I get, and this was just on the YouTube video I put up, I had to re-watch myself. But some people go, doesn't that take away the beauty? You know, you're looking at these ingredients and you're missing that whole beauty of it. Doesn't that kind of take it away? You're getting kind of technical here.

No. If all those ingredients are available in every given moment, do you see the richness and depth that's there? You start to realize that what we've been looking at is a cartoon versus what's real. What's really there is so much more interesting and fulfilling than what we've been accepting as. Of course that's what I think and that's what's there. What's there is what should be there. Or what could be there.

Or what I'm afraid is there. So I know one teacher always says, you know your thoughts aren't real, right? And I just kind of like that. Because we go, what are you trying to say? But today we're going to work with, so if you're tangled up in thoughts and feelings, we have a lot of ways to go. You can watch them flow. You can find a place to rest. Or, and this is kind of what some Zen practice is, you can tune in to the grounded reality of the present moment of see, hear, feel. And this, I have a lot of clients who are psychologists and psychiatrists in the psychology field.

There's lots of isms and ists in there. And we've communicated back and forth a lot about using mindfulness practice and stuff with patients. And I've mentioned this in here before, but there was, the person was trying to get a woman to tune into her body in a restful way. And this woman had been sexually traumatized and abused. And so just going in the body at all was just danger, danger.

Will Robinson can't go in the body. She just doesn't have, she just hasn't developed the skill yet to work with, there was so much there. So we said, what if we went out to sound? So she went out and worked with sound and insight, didn't even do the body at all, and developed this equanimity with it. And then developed the mindfulness skills there that then when we could come back to the body, she'd already had those muscles, those mindfulness muscles developed of clarity and equanimity and focus. So that when she came to the body, she didn't get, you know, if stuff came up, she had skills for saying, ah, this is this, this is this.

And I can, I can see and work with this skillfully to then rewire the brain so that we're not re-traumatizing every time. Does that make sense? And sound is here now. So what we hear at this moment is happening in this moment, and we don't really have a drama about it. It's not related to our personal issues.

So if at any moment you're going, oh my God, this is going on, or I can't keep doing this. Okay, that's coming in as internal talk. That's hearing in.

Wherever your distraction is, you can use your distraction to take you more deeply into your meditation. How? So if I'm hearing in, I can slide out on the auditory axis. Hear in, slide.

Every time I go, my God, you know, that person is rude. Okay, hear out into sound. You can think of it as some people went, oh, it's like an antidote. And I go, yeah, but it's really, you're already hearing. You're just sliding out and anchoring in the truth of this sound rather than the one you're making up in your head. And so when we hear sounds, sometimes we get images. And there's a visual component to our thinking process that we're usually less aware of because we walk around with our eyes open.

But we all get image with our eyes open. And if you haven't done this with me before, I will demonstrate it. So everyone look up here to the front of the room and see this lovely scarf and really see all of, see she needs to iron that, see the texture of the wood and the light, and really, really see it. Now look up in this direction and visualize your car, the inside of your car.

Okay, can you see the inside of your car? Okay, see how your focus kind of went back to see the car and this is softer? Now come forward and really see the texture here. See that difference? We do that thousands of times a day. We're not aware of it. We're going back and seeing it.

Every time you get a thought, oh, I'm going to go to the grocery store, you're going to see a grocery store. He said that you're going to see his face. You're going to go back and forth like that all day long. So today we're going to be working with that, see this. If you find yourself going back, because we're going to have eyes open at one point, if you find yourself going into things, ground in this and really go up. Look for texture.

That's the fascination. Look for texture. Every time you look, try to see something different you didn't see before. Like the kid with the ladybug or walking across the grass. That make sense? Cool. That's what we're going to do.

## FORGET ABOUT ME ~ Shinzen Young

Shenzhen, thank you so much for giving your time and energy today and always selflessly. Well, I appreciate being appreciated. You had a teacher once, you were saying that the way to show, you say this at the end of retreats, you say the way to show gratitude, what do you usually say? The best way to show gratitude to you for all you've done. I would say a couple of things. One is keep up your practice.

The other is pass it on, as they say. In some way or another, either at the subtle level of your vibe and your behavior changes, or at the descriptive level of you can describe your own practice to people, and even though you're not teaching them in any explicit way, they hear what you do and you can give a clear description of what you yourself do, and that's a kind of very important way you can teach people. Or maybe at the fully explicit level, you pass it on by becoming a teacher yourself and actually teaching techniques. So I would say continue your practice, pass it on. And then the other thing I would say, what I would want from people is that they forget about me.

I would want them to forget about me as a person. In other words, I know that sounds shocking and confusing, what I mean is to not link this to a person, an individual teacher. There's only one teacher, one thousand-armed goddess of compassion that spans all time and all space, and every individual teacher is just one hand on that, or one face on that, on her.

And we tend to just, I don't know, we look at the limbs, we don't see the whole goddess. So I would want them to forget about me as a person and realize that I'm just one part of this giant activity that has been propagating since prehistoric times. So not link it to a particular personality, what you got. Just forget about me completely. Well, I'm going to express my gratitude. I'm going to go out and tell somebody about this and then I'm going to forget all about you. I'm happy. Not! Well, that's on you. Thanks again.

## FROM SUFFERING to BLISS (whole session) ~ Shinzen Young

guides Stephanie Nash

Okay, so you mentioned you wanted to work on some specific issues. Anything you'd like to just tell me briefly about those issues before we start to work in terms of what it is and what your goals would be in working on it? Yeah, what I'm working with now is a strong feel component that has, you might call it touch, I sometimes call it secondary feel, but that tension that comes around the feel can lock into quite a dramatic degree. When it first arose, it seemed triggered by external event, but what I, it's a response, an emotional response to an event, but I think it became clear that as I processed it, that it kind of worked as a magnet to draw years, who knows what other stuff up with it that matched that emotional frequency. And then for a while now, several days, I've been working with it.

I let go of there having to be any talk image component. And it's just a huge amount of feel which I have techniques and ability to process, but it's quite a significant event. And I thought, ah, time to call in the big guns. And I thought you could help me with this and maybe someone could benefit from that help.

Let me ask some questions so I can make sure I understand the situation. You're having a lot of emotional type body sensation, what I call feel. But I think that you're saying that you have a muscle tension reaction to that feel when it arises. When, I think there's a very, very strong feel and because it is so nonstop and intense that the body just starts to tighten around it in a way that I'm working not only with the feel, but I have to kind of work with the tightening that comes around it. And so I might work with one, then work with the other, but there's no question the core, it's feel. And everything else is just because it's been so intense for so long, the body's just starting to, and I'm literally now experiencing physiological things in the body just simply from that tightening around the feel.

Does that make sense? Yes. And so you want to work with this sensory phenomenon, the underlying emotional sensations or feel as we would put it in the technical vocabulary, body sensation that seems emotional. And then there's a kind of physical response in the form of muscle tension. And that muscle tension, some people consider that to be a purely physical sensation. But because it's so linked with the emotion, some people consider it to be in and of itself an emotional sensation.

We can parse it either way depending on what's natural for that person. I have a few other questions to ask you. It sounds to me like you've already been working with it in the way that I would consider optimal. By that I mean that you're sometimes focusing on the tension reaction, sometimes focusing on the underlying feel itself, which is the general strategy of divine and conquer. And I've been using a lot of, you know, flow is probably where my natural strength is. And so, and I can work with flow and almost immediately have some kind of response to that of going into it. But then it re-arises and re-congeals so I thought, okay, I've got to maybe work more deeply or maybe you can just help me. Probably, the strategies that you are using are already optimal.

That's my guess. It's simply a matter of continuing with them. But let's just do some interactive stuff and we'll see what comes up.

I'm not sure that there's actually anything new to add content-wise. It may just be a numbers game of continuing what you're now doing. But like I say, let's see what happens.

I do have a couple more questions. Does the tension reaction that you're referring to, does that tend to come up in a pronounced pattern in real time or is it more of an ongoing sort

of situation? By that I mean, is there a clear sense of there'll be an eruption of feel and then there's a tension, eruption of feel, then there's tension? Or is it that the tension is sort of there in a fairly ongoing way? Or does it tend to fluctuate moment by moment with the fluctuations in the feel? A little bit of the second, a little bit of the third. The feel is pretty continuous, pretty intense, but there is a rising and falling depending on if I'm able to give it, if I'm able to stop and go into it, sometimes it might multiply in effect times 10 and become quite more than what you wanted to deal with, but I'm assuming that's a part of the process.

Sometimes my work with it will help it flow. The tension does not correspond directly to the feel and what I'm calling the tension is just from the feel having been so consistent, there's a kind of a not breathing and a tensing in that's creating stuff in the back. So it's not really a moment by moment physical muscle tensing around emotional body sensation. It's more the result that the emotional body sensations have been ongoing for so long that you're getting this secondary sensation.

Okay, now let me ask some other questions. You talk about the feel breaking up into flow and I'm assuming that happens with some consistency? You know, whenever I focus in on it, yes. How about the tension reaction? Does it break up into flow? If I'm focusing towards that, yes. That can break up into flow as well. They all do kind of like a rubber band snap back into place a lot.

It just feels like there's just been a momentum of... Okay, they break up into flow but then they can re-solidify. So you can actually have the tension and the feel both turn into flow with your practice. Have you attempted to do that during practice in motion like walking practice and so forth? Pretty much, yes. I have to, otherwise I wouldn't be able to function.

I wouldn't be doing this today if I wasn't. So you can already get them both to dissolve into flow which is pretty amazing. But when I'm doing an action, in other words if I'm stopping and all of my awareness is going into that, I can go total flow.

But when I have to also do this activity or talk to this person or do something like that, all of my attention isn't on it. So there's some congealing. I can do enough flow to function but I'm not floating on clouds all the way through. I do have periods where something like there's certain activities that help the flow. So when I'm doing a laughing meditation or when I'm facilitating somebody, I literally don't, it pretty much all goes flow during certain activities.

But the rest of the time it's having to kind of keep some awareness there and some awareness here just to kind of function. A couple more questions, which is the source of the greatest distress? Is it the feel or the tension reaction? The feel, absolutely. So you're not so concerned with dealing with the tension reaction? Oh that'll go when the feel... So the core issue is intensity of activation of emotional body sensation.

Absolutely. And I think that helps me hone in a little bit more on what our target should be. Have you attempted, well I should say as you know, a basic principle in mindfulness is divide and conquer. Case in point, you have divided this experience into, okay there's the emotional body sensations, that's one component, then there's the muscle reactions to those, that's the second component. So that's already a divide and conquer and that has already given you some relief that the average person wouldn't experience under comparable circumstances.

As you remember, a second axiom is if divide and conquer doesn't work, remember what I always say, subdivide until you do conquer. In this case, have you attempted to break the feel into specific flavors, anger, fear, sadness, in other words, have you applied the... Noting feeling flavors. Noting feeling flavor technique to this intense arising.

Yes, I have. What I have found to be more helpful is the investigating where exactly I'm feeling what. Okay, it's a clenching here, what are the boundaries, is there more pressure in, is it pushing out, you know, am I coming down. The more I'm kind of investigating it without necessarily putting a label of the quality, that's been a little more successful in helping me go through it. But I can tell you the quality. The subdivide principle can be applied with regards to either the quality, which is the noting feel flavors, so that gives you the spectrum, anger, fear, sadness, interest, what have you. But the subdivide principle can also be applied to the spatial aspect of things. So then that would be like... You want to stop for one second? No, let's just let it go. Okay.

It could happen during a real session. So you can subdivide into flavors, but you can also subdivide into locations. So it's an application of the same principle. So you're saying that subdividing it by individual body locations has turned out to be more productive. Yeah, location and quality of sensation. You mean, so it's a little of both? Yes.

Flavor and location, you're getting specific about those. So you've already made the major thing that I would first try, okay, because you've internalized the algorithm so well, and you say that that does help. Do you note the location, like with the location word, face? No, I haven't been doing that out loud. But you've been tracking the location, and then it sounds like you're staying up for a little while in a location. And moving my awareness around inside of it. Inventory, and see what it's like. When I'm inside of it, it's so much easier than when I'm outside of it, for me.

So that, once again, sounds like a pretty optimal strategy. Tell me, what are the range of flavors involved? It's primarily a fear flavor, primarily to an almost terror panic. Intense fear? Intense fear, and there's absolutely sadness. There's absolutely... Fear and sadness.

Yeah. Is there a reason for it, or is it just erupting in the body? Like I said, I think there was an event or two that triggered it on the outside, but this was out of proportion to that, and I saw that. And as I worked with it, I found that the particular story, the surface story...

I even knew, it was silly. But as I let go of there needing to be a story, I kind of just went into this huge feel. And as I've gone down in layers, I'm seeing kind of flickers of like, oh, fear of annihilation, that I'll be killed in any moment. There's not a logical thing to this. Yeah, right. In other words, it's not really coming from the object of external or... I think it tapped, I think whatever this was on the outside... The pool of fear. It tapped everything like a magnet, I think it drew everything up that resonated at that frequency, and it's just kind of really thrown me at how huge it is.

And they say in Ohio, huge, you're supposed to say huge. But really, it's taken all my technique or skill to be functioning. Okay. So we're having a huge upwelling of fear potential and it sounds like sadness. Yeah, there's sadness.

And are they equally strong, the fear and the sadness? I'd say the fear is probably, it's probably like the fear is the cake and the sadness is icing that's also going down through the cake. I get it. To use a food analogy. Actually, that's probably a pretty accurate description because that's what happens, they tangle and interact. And you say very little mental image or internal talk accompanying this. At first there was a lot, but as I go down...

It's almost pure body. How about very subtle image or talk activation, subliminal, a hint of something? The subliminal stuff is where that annihilation came up. Okay, that is starting to suggest some strategies.

Let me ask you further. I say annihilation, but the thing that comes up would be killed, like anybody at any moment could kill me. Yeah, yeah. It's phobic.

It's fear. And this is good. You've heard me a million times talk about how before we break through these things, they need to become, my phrase is, continuous and ubiquitous.



Continuous means unbroken in time, ubiquitous means everywhere in the body.

We're going towards that. If that's happening, then a process of permanent purification is happening. People, of course, are averse to the notion of letting something like fear or sadness become continuous through time and omnidirectional in the body, ubiquitous through the body. But that's penny wise and pound foolish, because being unwilling to pass through that temporarily keeps them always with the sort of Damocles of fear hanging over their head, and likewise with the other negatives like sadness, anger, and so forth. So you have to reach a point where it's completely irrational, completely over the top intense, doesn't stop in time, and is in every cubic centimeter of your body, if not of the known universe, in other words, perceived as larger than the body. And say, okay, I would allow this to go on forever. It's at that point that you're getting optimal catharsis, in the sense of cleaning out.

So it's taking a while, but I'm getting a clearer picture of what's going on. Just hearing you say that makes me feel better. You know, I mean, I still want to work, but it's kind of just helpful to have somebody say, because I've just been working on it by myself without talking to anyone, and it's very helpful to hear it. It's just helpful to hear that, you know.

Yeah, I would say that this is the stage before people become free. It's interesting too, because when I had a physical issue a year ago, where I had excruciating pain in my body, what happened was it felt like my skin all over my body was burned, was singeing, very hot. And the neurologist and everybody said it was probably in response to the pain. They said it's just your body's into an alarm alert mode. That's getting activated by this fear. So like I have that in addition, so you're talking about hot, you know. I've got that on the outside, this kind of singeing, and that will definitely, that directly corresponds with the intensity of the feeling.

So that's enough, isn't it? It's a lot to work with, but actually I need a little more information. Do you think that it's interacting with subtle levels of talk or image? Very very subtle, subliminal. What do you mean, interacting? By that I mean that the fear and sadness might be intensified by subtle subliminal activations of visual or auditory thinking. What I think is happening, and this is just having been working with it now for a while, I think it's like if there's a deck of cards that's all the images and thoughts that we have in a pool, that one hit something and it went down, and if there were like little shavings of metal, I'm sorry, I went back away from deck of cards, little shavings, all of those came up, and each one of those is an image or it could be image or talk stuff, but it's just like, and so you might get little flicks like of popcorn, but it might not be enough to go, oh yes, that's when I was fired. That's exactly what I mean by that. And when that comes up, it can poke, it can, it can, it can kind of like add a little bit of a wood shaving to the fire, but it's like the feel called that up and then that might poke in the feel a little bit, but if I stay with the feel, they just kind of hang out.

So the answer to the question is yes, there is interaction with subtle image, which is significant and also characteristic of catharsis, although it may primarily come up as body feel flavors, subliminal auditory and visual thinking often enters into the gestalt, especially the visual, because people don't usually hear hell, they usually see hell, although in theory you can hear it too, but image space is where the monsters are that might be linked to all of this, so that gives me some of the more information that I need. Okay now, believe it or not, yet more questions, okay, because well, because we got to see what's really going on and I don't... You're doing your house.

Yeah, well, you interviewed me. You're doing your house, MD. This is called differential diagnosis, baby. These are my huge diagnostic skills.

Okay, so let's see here. Have you ever had the experience of having strong fear that was pervasive through the body so dissolved into flow that it no longer caused you suffering? Yes. How about sadness? Have you ever done that? So then you've already done what we're

going to be working towards. We're going to be working towards that experience yet again, because it's a matter of, I mean basically, what, let's see, one, two, three, four, maybe there's four kinds of human beings. I mean there's a lot of ways to classify humans, right? But maybe one way to classify all human beings is there's most human beings who have never had the experience of physical pain flowing so completely that it turned into a flavor of catharsis rather than a flavor of suffering. Most humans have never had that experience, okay? So that's most humans. Then there are the humans that have at least had that experience once, okay? Then there are the humans that have had that same experience but with regards to rage, terror, or grief.

That's a whole other thing than physical pain in terms of what it's like when that breaks up. So we've determined that- And I think harder. Incomparably harder. Because pain is just pain. The emotional sensations have been honed by evolution to grip us and control us and distort us.

They've been honed by evolution for that task. That's what hell is. Hell is rage, terror, grief, shame flavors that have become so activated that they're able to convince you that not only will this be all you ever experience from now on, they're actually able to convince you that you never experienced anything else.

They have that much distorting power so that it seems like eternal in both directions. That would be hell. Purgatory is when you've experienced those sensations enough that they can't cause that illusion anymore but they're still there and you're working with them. The threshold between purgatory and heaven is when it turns into flow that we've been talking about.

So believe it or not, one other question. Besides fear and sadness, are there hints of any other flavors in there? Like anger or shame specifically. I actually look specifically for them. I think the shame flavor can, like if something happens in the extra world that embarrasses me, I feel that shame and that can trigger all this. You know, it's irrational.

Is it part of the present gestalt, the shame flavor, or is it pretty much we're dealing with sad and had? If we call fear had. Just for alliteration, I couldn't resist. I know, I didn't go for it. Because there's mad, sad, glad and had.

You're changing my feel favors here. Don't worry, we'll get back to hell soon. Here's what's interesting. You know that heat I talked about in the body? It shares territory with shame and embarrassment in terms of the flesh. And so it can trigger it.

So they all kind of interlinked in that way. It's all information that I need to do the guidance. Let's do it. Okay. Okay. So take a moment to stretch up and settle in and focus for just a second on physical relaxation into the posture. Okay, we're going to start by working in the fierce sad system.

So at any given instant, there'll be exactly one of four states. Just fear, just sad, both or neither. We're going to ignore everything else. We're just going to penetrate that one system of affective somesthesia. My way of talking make sense? Well, until the last two words. I know what you meant. I know.

That's Greco-Roman for emotional type body sensation. Thank you. I love it though.

I know. So I'd like you to note fear, sad, fear and sad, or none. One of those four. You want fear and sad or both? Let's use fear and sad with a Boolean and operation.

So we'll get the four logically possible states of the fierce sadness system. Any questions about that? Okay, good. Out loud? Yeah, for starters. Fear and sad. Fear and sad. Fear and sad. Fear and sad.

Fear and sad. Okay, good. Now go to mental labels. Thinking the labels rather than speaking them. Okay.

Is it still mostly both at the same time? Yes. Okay, good. Now we're going to work just with the fear. I'm assuming that there is one or more areas of local intensity for the fear.

Is that correct? Yes. Is it one or are there several disconnected? There's probably one primary one that spreads out and has little branches to it. And then there's a little bit of a journey to a secondary one for the most part.

Okay. So the primary one spreads branches. How broadly? The primary one is right at the center of my chest, like right in between my rib cage. How broadly are the branches spread through the body? It kind of comes down around to the side and in there, but it kind of spreads out a bit like the core, the center is kind of there in a kind of big odd shape. And then there are ways in which I think it kind of reaches subtly, like subtle veins kind of going out around to the middle of my back. Okay.

Excellent detection skill. I'm assuming that the subtler ramifications are of less intensity? Absolutely. Here's what we're going to do. We're going to just work with fear. Each time you note sad, I would like you to zoom out to the subtle ramifications, focus on them only.

Every time I note sad? I'm sorry, every time you note fear. Go out to the subtle ramifications and work towards perfect equanimity with those subtle sensations because they're subtle, it may be possible to have complete openness with them even though you can't do so with the local intensities that are at the epicenter of it. So we're going to use the zoom out option on the noting. You're going to zoom out to cover the subtle spread and work towards perfect equanimity with that. And don't concern yourself with the local splash at the center at all. Just with the global ripple in a rhythm with the mental labels of fear.

The word fear. Any questions about that? No. You want me... I'll just repeat it back. I'm zooming out.

I'm going to keep noting fear with mental labels, but I'm going to, when I note fear, zoom out to the subtler tributaries, so to speak, of the experience of fear in my body, not tuning into the big main Grand Central Station part of it. That's perfect. Okay.

And yes, and by mental label I mean think to word fear to indicate that that's the flavor. And then you zoom out. And then I'm just going to have you do that on your own for a few minutes. Okay. And then I'm going to have you do that on your own for a few minutes.

Able to do that pretty good? Yeah. Is there any hint of flow in the global spread of the fear? Oh, yeah. It's pretty fluid? Yeah, it flows.

It's interesting. I tend to be flowy in general, but when I worked with this, it would... At first I got little hits of nausea. Like I started to feel a little nausea. Other flavors.

Yeah. And then a little ticklish, but if I just kind of kept with it, those would just... You know, if I just kind of just stayed with them.

Yes, they dissipate. So you're able to get the global component in the fear flavor to flow. Yeah. Okay. Can that flow spread into the local intensity so that you get a local global flow with the fear? You know, I think I started to naturally start to do that, and I think that's when the nausea started to...

I think my body... Okay, let's go for local global flow now. So that means you'll remember that there's, in my standard formulation of the noting technique, you remember zoom in, zoom out, zoom both ways. So we're going to zoom both ways, out to the perimeter, to the weak sensations there, and ride the momentum of the flow that's there, and simultaneously zoom into the core intensity and see if you can get them to get that local splash, global

ripple. While keeping the zooming, so simultaneously... Yeah, you're zooming in and out, into the core, out to the perimeter, and you're doing that precisely to facilitate the spread of the global flow into the local intensity. So the awareness is moving in and out. In and out at the same time.

You have a phrase that you came up with. Sliding. You're going to slide in both ways. You're going to slide out with your awareness and let it facilitate a global circulation of fear, and you're going to slide in and let that facilitate a local circulation of fear. So you get both the intense areas and the peripheral areas as a single fear flow.

Able to get a little sense of that? Oh yeah. So that's a catharsis, a releasing of fear. It creates this kind of center of this, it's kind of a deep joy that kind of comes up the center, but then I get really hot. Yeah, let the joy be there, let the heat be there. These are all reactions to the catharsis. And if the heat produces more fear, then just dissipate that in the fear. Except that we're going to let go of the fear now and go to the sadness.

Have to be a rocket scientist to figure out what we're going to do. Same procedure, start with the periphery of the sadness flavor. Work with that. See if it's amenable through a zoom out process to an experience of a global flow in the sadness. If that's feasible, do that, and then go in and look for the local flow in the epicenter, and you're going to get a local global flow in the sadness, if indeed that's sort of doable at this time.

I'd like you to explore the doability of that with regards to sadness. Just give it some time. Ever able to get a little hint of that? Yeah. Since the sadness doesn't have the same vein network of spread, I just kind of instead of, since I didn't quite have the subtle area, I just went around the boundaries of it. That's exactly correct. That corresponds to the subtle.

It's just less widespread. That was a good move. I just made the boundaries soft and then treated that like... That's right.

That's what I would have had you do. So you're able to get a little sense of that. Yeah.

Okay, good. Now, I'm going to have you do a fairly intricate concentration, where you're going to attempt to experience simultaneously a kind of river of fear and a kind of river of sad that flow through each other, interpenetrating without interfering. So it's almost like... Could you say that again? Oh yeah.

Right. There's the sadness flavor and it's a sort of like giant liquid drop that's sort of expanding and contracting, right? Right. And there's the fear flavor and it's a giant liquid drop doing the same essential dance.

Right. Now, you know how in a ghost movie, you see that the ghost can walk through the wall, right? Right. The ghost passes through the wall, the wall gives no resistance. Right. Now, imagine you didn't have a ghost and a wall, but you had two ghosts and they were both doing their own thing, but they could pass through each other without disturbing each other.

Right. When they occupied the same place at the same time. So you're going to have these two ghostly waves, one flavored fear, the other flavor sad. And they're sort of dancing, except unlike physical dancers, parts of them, even all of them can occupy the same place.

So they're constantly waving and the waves pass through each other without disturbing each other, without developing pressure areas where they would clash. Does this metaphor make sense? Yeah. Have you attempted to do this with the fear and sad? Not in this, not this round. This may be the part of the missing piece because you could get them individually to flow, but then the next step is collectively to flow. Because if they both flow at the same time, interpenetrating wherever they need to without interfering, then they won't multiply together into overwhelm. And so the ability to have more than one flavor

and to separate the flavors, have all the flavors flow, and then have the flow fields interpenetrate without interference is a sequence that I take people through when they're going through big challenges that are polychromatic body distress, meaning a lot of different colors in the body. Then we need to train the colors to flow through each other.

Through each other. It's an interesting. In this ghostly dance. It's an interesting intimacy between them. Yeah. It's like they're dancing through each other as well as with each other.

And to the extent that they're both flowing, you'll get an even more powerful flavor of purification and hopefully a significantly deeper sense of relief. Okay, good. How's that coming? Good. Good. Good in what sense? When I can allow them both to share the same space and I'm recognizing how I've been keeping them separate and keeping that line between them and when I allow them to just kind of do that, the kind of joy I talked about before with the fear, it's a very intense version of that and then it kind of seems to ignite this PT-like energy up the body and it gets very hot. So you're getting hot and rapturous with fear and sadness. Yes, I am.

Which most people would say is rather counterintuitive, but your facial expression proves it. Yeah. Okay, good. It's really interesting though because as it does, I find myself wanting to comment on it and I'll go off and talk and then it loses it a little bit. Yeah, and you have to come back.

It's got to be done purely in the budget. It's because the comments and then, you know... It does trigger some little topics to go, this is all about it. That's right, but your use of practice allows you to stop that and not sort of go down in that. Yeah, well plus there's motivation to kind of stay with this.

It's intrinsically rewarding. Now next step, see if you can have the fear and the sadness dancing with and through each other with your eyes open. And you may find defocusing the eyes initially helpful. So we can maintain it somewhat into a more ordinary experience. It's interesting when I am, as I kind of go in and out here as I do it, and I'm going to talk while keeping my eyes open, but I'm getting to where I'm honing in on the one specific place in the body they both share in a powerful way.

And if I can just kind of keep track of flow there, letting it be, whether it's the red or blue, you know, it kind of helps me maintain it with my eyes open more. Good. Now see if you can keep some contact with that even after we make some eye contact. It may be a little trickier, but this is what we just did here is probably one of the missing pieces of the solution to the situation that you described.

I'm not sure it's all of the missing pieces. I've got a few other ideas besides this. But I think for this session, one. One epiphany is worth the price of admission. A little bit of money on the table.

You haven't done this before, this theme of different flavors. Interdigitation was a word you used to use. And what's so interesting is as soon as you guided me on this, I thought, I'll guide somebody else in this. But I didn't think of it for me.

I was just too busy. Oh, you remembered to do this. You remember to get the flavors to do this. Oh, I have other people do this. Right, but you didn't remember that you could do it for yourself.

I was just, all my circuits were just so full, I guess. Well, you know, that goes to a very general principle in the way I set up my approach to meditation, which is that the assumption is that when people face real challenges, even people without a background in practice, if you interactively guide them, will be able to have pretty dramatic experiences pretty consistently. Dramatic, positive experiences.

It has also been my experience that people that are quite good at meditation, when they're faced with real life challenges, can easily forget. But all you need is somebody to do this. And it's like, oh yeah, I knew how to do that. And then now you're set.

This is one session. We don't need 20 years of therapy here. It's like, okay, now you sort of know what to do. So I think that's excellent. But I will, for subsequent sessions, remind me that I had some other ideas of, well I can actually just tell you.

Just tell me now and then I can always replay it and go, remember you had this and this. So the other thing is that, okay, one missing piece was, well, the two flavors have to simultaneously flow and through each other. Another possible missing piece is that you're getting significant interaction with subliminal thinking. And you might want to look in that direction. And the way you look in that direction, what I was going to have you work with is a special exercise that, with all the years we've done, I'm not sure we've ever done this one, but I'll ask you. Have we ever done noting feel sources? What that means is, I have you note if there's no fear, you say no fear. If there is fear but it's not triggered by anything you're aware of, you say just fear. And then you specify if the fear has been triggered by fear from image, fear from talk, fear from sound, fear from sight, or fear from touch.

No, we haven't done that. We've mentioned fear, I call that noting feel sources. And feel can be generic or specific.

That was the next thing I had in the hopper to try after this, because what may be happening is that you're getting significant triggering from other senses that are activating the fear in real time. And usually what, you know how I always say, okay, what is science in a nutshell? How much of what, when, and where, interacting in what ways, and changing at what rates? Typically I emphasize the what, the where, and the rates of change. But some of the special techniques are designed to elucidate the interactions, specifically what's triggering what. And I find that when people are going through significant intractable fear experiences, or emotion in general, but especially fear, literally a few minutes of noting what is triggering that fear in terms of the broad sensory categories. So we can now detect no fear, fear but not triggered by anything, okay, no fear, fear, fear from image, fear from talk, and especially subtle image and subtle talk, the subliminal stuff. The way you know that's happening is you get a tug towards image space or a tug towards talk space, no content awareness at all, but the next instant there's a spike in the fear in the body. Now you know that the subconscious mind... I'm quite aware of having that. Yeah, the subconscious. Well it turns out if you ask yourself, if you constrain yourself in real time to know did it come from image, talk, sight, sound, or the physicality of the body, because it's got to be one of those five, that keeping track of the whole system, somehow that vastly reduces the overwhelm.

## Goals & Rewards of Teaching ~ Shinzen Young

So what is the most rewarding thing for you as a teacher? Not hard to imagine. It's seeing progress of people that study with me.

That's the most rewarding thing. And that progress takes various forms. Some people experience little progress, little pieces of progress.

Every once in a while somebody actually has a major insight. So that's what's rewarding for me as a teacher is seeing the progress of the students. I only judge my worth as a teacher in terms of the progress of the student. Confucius said, not to learn is the student's fault. Not to teach is the teacher's fault.

I disagree. If the student doesn't learn, it's not the student's fault. It's the teacher's fault. It's my fault.

In other words, it's the job of the teacher to make it possible for the student to learn. We can't say, oh well, you don't have the right karma or whatever. It's like if they're not getting it, it's on me.

It's not on them. So to find a way to communicate with them. So you're talking about communication skills.

Well yes. Unless you're doing a transmission. You asked me what's most rewarding. In general, what's most rewarding is when the students make progress. If a student happens to have a classical liberation experience, which happens occasionally, the sudden kinds of things, that of course is really, really good. So that's extremely rewarding. The other rewarding thing for me is if I can figure out something new, something that hasn't been tried before, that works. Which you do on a daily basis. You're always coming up with something new.

Well I go around with a notebook. I would say that although I've been guiding people for some 35 years, I learn something new every day. And I take notes on my own process. Every once in a while I get these epiphanies of creativity with regards to how you can teach people. And when I get one of those, that's really, really good. And that's extremely fulfilling. I try it out and it actually works. My ultimate goal as a teacher is that anything I have personally experienced, I could lead anybody else to that experience. That's what I set for myself as my goal.

## GOD's ARROW ~ Shinzen tells his Experience of Enlightenment

How do you describe the book? Well, it's very hard to put into words. That's why most teachers don't talk about this stuff, right? For very good reason. Because it can be described a lot better than the books tell you it can be described. But it cannot be perfectly described.

I could try to amplify it, but it's going to be explaining the obscure with the even more obscure. That's okay. Yeah, I'll do it. But do it anyway. I'm going to do it anyway. I'm actually doing it as we're speaking.

I have a line. There's a word in Latin that describes it, believe it or not. But it is so esoteric that almost no one has ever heard this word.

The only reference that you will find to this word is if you look up the Ecstasy of St. Teresa, which refers to a piece of sculpture that was done in the high Renaissance, in the Baroque period, by Bernini. It's this great classic thing from the Counter-Reformation. Catholic art is very dramatic.

So it's St. Teresa experiencing pervasive gone. But of course, how do you express that in a work of art that's going to emotionally grip people? Well, she's shown swooning. It was a hugely controversial work of art.

People were very annoyed by it, and I'm talking about back in the 1600s, I guess, because it's very sensual. Let's just put it at that. Anyway, what's happening is she's out, and there's this angel on her chest, and he's pulling out this arrow. He's not stabbing her, he's actually removing the arrow. What happened before the arrow going through, that's called transverberation. It's when the source creates a wormhole from itself through time, space, self, and world, and back to itself. Right now, there's a wormhole. It starts back here, goes through here, goes right through the center of your head, and out the other way. Part of me is looking through that wormhole, and it absolutely sees nothing. It's just void to void.

But all around that is the color and form I need to interact. I really appreciate that. All I can say is, if that makes any sense to anyone, then I salute you. I just love that word, like God's arrow that goes through the time-space continuum. Of course, how wide is that channel? Well, if that channel attains a certain width, you will enter nirodha samapatti, infused contemplation, and you're out, out, out.

Maybe three days. No movement, no perceptible breath, etc. To follow up, as a continuum, then, the degree to which you are the unfixed wormhole, and the degree to which there is a recognition of—Is a movable feast. Yes, so that's the new paradigm, God's wormhole. It's called transverberation, if you're interested.

It's just an odd word for meaning when God shoots an arrow through you. I also really enjoyed your saying what your day was. What I heard you say is that sometimes you live without source. That sent me to your book to look up the word source, and there are many recommendations in your book to read about source. How do you live without source during your day? The same way I did before I started to meditate, because it's just the experience of an ordinary person that doesn't know how to meditate. The only difference is I don't care.

I have no preference between being in a deep state or just being agitated and bopping around, taking care of business. Actually, St. Teresa explained it perfectly. She said, it's a window, it's open all the time, but—well, not really. Sometimes it closes, but you don't care because you know it's going to open again.



And you know that with such certainty that you don't even care. I have a question. The transverberation that you described the other day, the God's arrow kind of coming through with the shaft, did that for you— did that happen—we did a video on YouTube about key moments for you, and you talked about the first one where you reached around and realized your boundaries weren't there anymore. Did that happen just suddenly that day, or is this something that evolved over time? It took 20 years from the first breakthrough. The first breakthrough was that day? So it was 20 years after that? That I started to get the transverberation.

And did it slowly develop? Yes, slowly. First just a hint, then more and more salient. Got it. Thank you.

# GUIDED MEDITATION of EXPANSION & CONTRACTION ~ by

SHINZEN YOUNG

Once again, take a moment to stretch up and settle in. The spine is erect through balance and alignment, less through strength and effort. Like a tree expanding to meet father sky, while the whole rest of the body hangs limp and loose, yielding to the contractive force of mother earth. This posture is born in between expansion and contraction.

Therefore, the first consciousness, the shoushin, sometimes translated as beginner's mind, the first thing you experience when you sit, exemplifies the ultimate goal of the practice, to give yourself back to the fundamental forces of expansion and contraction. We've been exploring what I call surface expansion contraction, meaning manifestations of the source that are available to anyone. Of course, they may not seem like the source. They may seem quite ordinary, sometimes uncomfortable, even problematic. A good doctor can cure your disease.

Probably an extraordinary doctor can convince you you were never sick. Let's review what we've explored so far. We'll begin with the principle of increase or decrease. Something can get more intense. Something can speed up.

Something can get larger in one, two, or three spatial dimensions. Nothing special about that. It's expansion though. Affirmation, the principle of increase. Something can decrease in the same ways. Get less intense, where the frequency of an arising can slow down, or something can shrink in one, two, or three dimensions of space. Let's take a moment to explore expansion and contraction in this guise. You may only be aware of increase or decrease.

You may be aware of both at the same time. Or there might not be any such movement present, in which case it's actually a form of rest, freedom from those two kinds of change. The expansion and contraction in the sense of increase, decrease may be in just one part of your being, or in one modality, or one location.

Or it may be evident broadly throughout your experience, perhaps even a sense that there's always both everywhere. Sometimes the expansion-contraction can be cyclic. Something expands, then it contracts. Or something simultaneously both expands and contracts. And then they disappear. Sometimes the sense of expansion and contraction can be abiding. There's an eternal in and out, in part or all of your being.

It's all good, it's all natural. A certain amount of guessing and groping will be involved if you haven't done a lot of this. Recall that one of the dimensions of mindfulness is clarity, and one of the sub-dimensions of clarity is the ability to detect. And this is a detection skill, a noticing of a commonality that may be subtle.

If you wish to label, the labels would be expansion, contraction, both, and rest or none for an absence. Okay, good. Now let go of that. And we're going to explore another manifestation, which is pressure force. Often it's in the body, but it could be in visual and auditory, both inner or outer. You may have a sense that something's pushing in, pulling in rather, or pushing out, or doing both at the same time. Or there may be no pressure whatsoever anywhere in your being. Instead of interpreting pressure as problematic, we're going to just think of it as a force that's moving out or moving in, or moving in both directions at once. If it moves in both directions at once, it might interdigitate, sort of pass through itself. Or there might be a clash, an interference.

There's no one to blame. If the pressure waves just pass through each other, interpenetrating without interfering, like two ghosts walking along a road, move through each other, well, then fine. But if there's a bang, like two cars hitting each other, just have equanimity with that to the best of your ability. If there's no pressure, enjoy the freedom from pressure. It's a rest or a non-situation. Typically, we have a sense that we need to do something about pressure, ameliorate it in some way.

And actually, there can be times when that's useful, appropriate. But for now, we're just going to observe it. I'm going to get my light.

Okay, good. Now let go of that and we're going to explore yet another manifestation of expansion-contraction, one which is often interpreted as problematic, and indeed is from a certain perspective, but from another perspective can be looked upon impersonally and blamelessly as just part of the dance of space. You may be aware of your attention scattering or being flooded, you're pulled to more than one thing at the same time, pulled in and out at the same time, or pulled to many places in your body, or pulled to your mind and your body, or your mind goes to many places.

Scattering, we'll consider that to be a form of expansion. Or you may be gripped and held by something. It won't let you go. Often we interpret it as I won't let it go.

And that can be a valid interpretation, but we're going to think of it differently now. Your space is being limited, held. There's nothing personal about it. There's no blame. Scattering is a part of the dance of space. Gripping is part of the dance of space. So if there's no scattering or gripping, great, enjoy that as a rest state, a freedom from this aspect of expansion, contraction. But if there is, yield to it.

Let yourself be spread to the six directions or let yourself be nailed down without fighting. Just taking it to be the flow of space seems like it's scattering and gripping forces, but actually it's just the curvature of space. It's actually an interesting metaphor from general relativity. Whole different way to think about things. Okay, good.

Now we're going to explore one more ordinary manifestation of expansion-contraction. But I'll give you a little heads up. There's some subtlety involved in this one. We like to get comfortable by resting in some center. Maybe we're enjoying thinking about a certain something or we're comfortable in a certain sensory environment. We settle in or, quote, get centered. It's comfortable, it's ordering to be centered somewhere, moment by moment. If we get ripped away from whatever our center might be, or if we get knocked off center, that's interpreted as disorder.

And it's often uncomfortable. Then we may scramble to get back to center. There's nothing wrong with being centered. But there's something good about becoming free from the need to be centered, to have a fixed position, even for a fraction of a second.

This next exercise will probably involve a considerable amount of guessing and groping, and that's perfectly okay. Notice that as soon as you might find a center, something is going to knock you off that center, pull you to the right or to the left or in front or behind or above or below or in all directions at once. The pull might be visual, auditory, somatic, all of them. It could be inner, it could be outer, but as soon as there's a centering, there's a de-centering. Who's responsible for the de-centering? Who gives you that gift that sets you free? It's expansion.

Something expands somewhere. And it could be very, very slight, incredibly subtle, but there's a force to pull you off wherever the comfortable alighting center may be, to de-center. Put alternatively, it knocks the center away or causes a gone or a partial gone of wherever the comfortable center might be. When you're aware that your center is being tugged or the rug is being pulled, that's expansion doing that. And the actual collapse of the center, the slipping of the rug under your feet, is a form of contraction.

The center will not hold. It dissipates. We'll consider that to be a form of contraction.

It's very subtle, it's counterintuitive. In one way, having a center itself is contraction. In another way, the gone of the center is contraction. Expansion prevents you from getting fixated, leaving you with the prospect of learning about a new ordering principle, becoming that authentic human that has no fixed position. The disappearance of the center, however, is contraction. The force that causes it is expansion. Those forces are a primordial ordering principle that can never be disordered, and to the extent that you have one foot firmly placed in each, you can travel effortlessly back and forth between heaven and hell with impunity.

If you're aware of your center being even slightly messed with, interpret that as contraction and let it happen. Don't hold on. Move on. But also notice that's happening because of expansion. You're simultaneously expanding and contracting. And it's liberating. I fully appreciate that the words I just spoke may seem utterly inscrutable.

That's okay. Just explore. In five minutes, five years, 15 years, 15 minutes before your death, they may be very significant.

So far, all of the aspects that we've been looking at are ordinary. Something gets more intense or speeds up or larger. There's an outward pressure force or a scattering force or a force that pulls you out of a comfortable position in consciousness. Or something decreases or slows down or gets smaller or there's an inward pressure force or a gripping force or a disappearance of the ability to hold a center.

De-centered, knocked off center. Related with all of the above may be an awareness of deep expansion contraction or not. Deep expansion and contraction is a sense of space effortlessly spreading, effortlessly collapsing or doing both at the same time.

Or being perfectly still. No movement from or towards. Deep expansion and contraction lies around, behind, within. All of the ordinary things we've been looking at.

Sort of hidden. The reason for looking at surface expansion and contraction is it directs your attention to possibly detecting the effortless dance of space that is the primordial great perfection that proceeds and follows each sensory and motor event. And actually if you understand deeply you'll realize it pervades each sensory and motor event. From the good back to the good without ever leaving the good is to live at the source.

To live near fauna. Now let's explore the possibility, certainly not the certainty, but the possibility that something like that might be available to attention at this time. All that will be associated with the ordinary stuff. Something gets more intense there tends to be a spreading. Something speeds up there tends to be a spreading. Something gets larger obviously there's a spreading. But sometimes the pressure could cause a spreading. The scattering is definitely a spreading. And likewise for the converse. So sort of letting go of the sensory content and becoming fascinated with the spirit contour. Let's just explore the possibility that you might be able to detect at this time the deep version. And if that's not available that's perfectly okay. Just choose one or a combination of surface expansion contraction to attend to.

Absolutely wow. Sometimes deep expansion and contraction is cyclic. There's a both and then a God of both of them. Both rest, both rest cyclically. Typically small pieces of experience are born in those small cycles.

An itch here, an image there. But sometimes the awareness of expansion and contraction is eternal. It's always both. Peppered by an absolute tranquility.

It's always none. The reason it's always both and always gone everywhere is because of all those little cycles they sum up. To an eternal efflux and reflux. A formless fountain of youth.

A formless spirit womb whose peristalsis births self and world moment by moment. It may just be an idea for you at this time. That's fine. But let's explore the possibility of an experience. Be filled. Now in a moment, we'll transition from formal practice to a bit of discussion. Decide how you'd like to practice intentionally, if at all, during the discussion period.

You could maintain formal practice. You could have something sort of going in the background. You could pepper it with micro hits or just suspend the involvement and enjoy the conversation. But make it a clear decision. It's all good. Recall that the goal is to maintain formal practice at all times other than the possibility of during talks and discussions and such. Thank you.

## Guided Meditation on the phone? Any for beginners?

[www.BasicMindfulness.org](http://www.BasicMindfulness.org) ~ Shinzen Young

Meditation on the Phone But there was something you referred to earlier on in terms of teaching meditation to people on the phone.

And that piqued my interest a bit, and I wasn't sure, I don't think I've ever heard of anyone teaching someone to meditate on the phone. So could you just tell me a little bit about what you mean there and how that happens? Well, I wanted to create a fully modern delivery system. After I had sort of reformulated the techniques in terms of the five ways, which was one tier or level of creativity, then I turned my attention towards the issue of, well, now I've got a modernized version of the classical paths to enlightenment, how do I make this easily available to people around the world? And so if you think about it, traditionally what people do is they do some daily practice, maybe 10, 20 minutes, a half an hour a day, what have you, and then they do periodic intensive retreats, which typically would be a day or a weekend or a week or two weeks or three months or in Tibet, three years, three months, and three days in a cave, et cetera, et cetera, some combination of day-to-day practice plus some sort of periodic intensive practice, typically done with a group, although not inevitably. That rhythm of practice is the standard formula.

If you maintain something like that, then the passage of time will mark the process of psycho-spirituality. That's the six months to... When you talked about how long it takes for us to begin to see the results and you said it might be six months to a year. Six months to a year. That's not including this three-month retreat thing.

You don't have to do three months, certainly not three years. But I think that a person does need to do some day-to-day practice on their own. I tell people the minimum is 10-4, 10 minutes most days of working on your own, then at least four hours of continuous intensive retreat once a month. And what does that mean, four hours of...

No, you don't sit without moving, but you have unbroken practice for four hours, but you may get up and stretch and do things like that. So it occurred to me that most people in the world are not in a position to take even four hours out to go to a center. They have a family situation, they have a work situation, they probably don't live near a mindfulness center, they can't incur the expenses, the lost wages, the travel expenses, the expenses of being in a venue where you have to get lodging and meals if you do residential retreats.

So a way to make all of the features of a group residential retreat available to anyone in the world and circumvent these problems would be to pipe it into the individual's home in four-hour blocks. And that would be with a conference call. Is this a recording? No, it's live.

It's me or my facilitators live. So the way it works is you go to [basicmindfulness.org](http://basicmindfulness.org) and you register for a retreat. The programs are always on the second weekend of the month. One two-hour program on Friday evening, two four-hour programs on Saturday separated by an hour, and then two four-hour programs on Sunday. So that's the second weekend of every month you know that you can plan ahead. Do you have to do the whole, are they sequential? No, they're completely independent of each other. So I could just do four hours on Sunday? You could do just two hours on a Friday.

So it can be as short as two hours on Friday, and it can be as long as Friday, two four-hour periods on Saturday, and two four-hour periods on Sunday, since you've taken the whole weekend for practice, and anything in between. The programs are all independent. You register for them individually. And so it's sort of like dharma on demand. You might say you

decide what you're interested in.

But it's all unified around the five ways. I'm sorry, are you sitting there holding a phone to your head for eight hours? No, you don't hold the phone. You either use a speakerphone or you get from Radio Shack a hands-free headset with a microphone. It costs you \$20. You put that, replace your handset with the headset so that you've got a hands-free operation.

If you're going to do the programs with consistency, it's worth it to buy the headset or to get a speakerphone. So you're sitting there, your eyes are closed, and everybody calls in to the number. There's from 40 to 90 people on the call, depending on various factors. From all over? All over the world.

All at the same time? All at the same time. Oh, how neat is that? And many of them know each other because they've been on site programs together. Because I also go around the country and run residential retreats, so people know each other.

I know who's on the call. Yeah, well, everybody introduces themselves. So you see, people thought, well, gee, it's telephone, it's going to separate people.

But actually, we found that it very much unites people. It creates a virtual community of practice. So what happens is it starts precisely at the posted time, but people typically call in 15 minutes early, and there's just free schmoozing and socializing.

Schmoozing is important. Yeah, that's an ancient Sanskrit word. It builds community and builds a camaraderie so that when the guidance starts, well, I claim to take the mist out of mysticism, and I don't like things to be mystical schmistical. But there are some mystical schmistical things. I can't really explain how that bonding takes place, because after all, it is just people on a phone. But somehow, it's like you're in the same room. It's really weird. Just knowing that they're there and the fact that you've had this socializing before and what have you, it's like you sit really strong, and you've sensed the presence of these other people.

Plus, you usually have your eyes closed most of the time anyway, so even if they were in the room, you'd have your eyes closed. Yeah, something happens that is a synergy that's more than I expected. So what happens is you call in, and you choose the program you want, and every month there's an intro program so that you can start up any time. I call it the Home Practice Program.

You get it off of [basicmindfulness.org](http://basicmindfulness.org) to register and to find out about it. But the way it's set up is you can begin any month. There's always a program for first-timers that's an intro to one of the five ways, and you can begin with any one of the five ways. So if I've never meditated before, once a month there's some way I can call in and have someone guide me from scratch, like I have no idea what to do. Any of the programs that say Part 1, so Focus In Part 1, Focus Out Part 1, Focus on Rest, Change, and Positives. Those are the five ways? Those are the five ways.

All the Part 1 programs require no previous experience whatsoever. Great.

# GUIDED MEDITATION: "The TALK-FEEL Connection" ~Stephanie

Nash

Kayla Barry, member of the collab team at Miami動態幫手 at Miami Miccontrol, allocated 11 gibbons at Tribal A.L.

Ethan Rock and Mizzahbox at Save L.A. And Zobra Macaroni, in the craft club of Arms-Okai Camera Company You can take a moment to let the body settle. Take a nice deep breath in and on the breath out just let the body relax, release any tension, let the jaw drop. You could let the weight of the arms just allow the shoulders to drop back and down. Let the front part of the torso be soft, the belly be soft, allowing the breath to move easily in and out of the soft belly. And on the breath in you can allow the spine to lengthen easily, naturally, so that the head is balanced easily on top. The spine is balanced, the head is balanced. There's no muscular effort or energy for the most part involved in sitting. There's no muscular effort or energy for the most part involved in sitting.

See how you can allow the spine to lengthen and everything else just hang down from it. So there's alert, alertness and repose. The lengthening of the spine allows the mind to stay alert and the breath out allows relaxation, letting go, release in the body.

Let the face be soft. And tune into the body, what it feels like to sit here right now. Feeling your arms, your legs, your torso, your head, whole body.

And there'll be tangible touch sensations of how the world touches your body, clothes on the skin, air, temperature, humidity, pressure of the body on the chair or cushion. These are all just sensations, sensations of breathing, the movement of the breath in and out. Tongue in the mouth, eyes in the socket. Just take a moment to allow your awareness to feel the body, letting the awareness circulate and soak into sensations. Hands, feet, face. And if you find your mind wandering, since we're allowing our awareness to move from location to location, you could always label the name of the location where your attention moves, elbow, knee. With each label, allowing your awareness to move to that location and soak into whatever sensation you feel there, noticing the quality, the texture, the boundaries, is there movement? And then allowing your awareness to stay there or move on to another location, becoming intimate with body sensation, what you're aware of at this moment. Okay.

Okay. And while you're investigating body sensation, you may or may not be aware of a different category of body sensation, subjective, the sensations associated with mood or emotion, different flavors of feeling may arise. There's different qualities of sensation maybe in different locations in the body. For most people, the front part of the torso up into the throat and face are prime central locations for emotional feel in the body. So unless you're absolutely emotionally neutral at this time, you may or may not have the slightest tug, pull, spread, cringe, tightness, warmth of pleasant or unpleasant.

The pleasant or unpleasant would be what we call feel, feeling in, feeling emotion in the body. And it might be quite subtle. Since we're sitting in a relatively quiet room, we may or may not be aware of the subtle, but we're aware of the subtle. And you don't have to know what the feeling is, but if you're aware of any such sensation, we'll explore it in a little more detail as we move on. But if you're aware of anything like that now, just allow that to be part of your investigation of body sensation in addition to the tangible face, shoulder, knee, elbow. There may be something in the center of the chest or in the belly. It's related to emotion or mood. Subtle is significant.



Good. Now I want you to keep your awareness in the body, and I'm going to clap my hands. And I want you to notice you will have a response to the sound of my hands clapping, but there may also be a literal vibrational response from sound coming into the body. So just notice what you notice from the sound of my hand clapping, keeping your awareness on the body.

Feel that. External sounds play upon our body all day and night. So I'd like you now to practice allowing sounds to move through your body like the body is porous, and open your awareness out to the sounds around us. And when we open out to sound, image may get strongly stimulated.

You may have images of the environment or pictures you make that you associate with sounds. If that happens, and it probably will, just let that be in the background. That'll be there. But really hear sound and feel the body's response to sound, just like the clap, but maybe less dramatic. And my voice, of course, will be a sound, too. Now I'm going to play some sounds for you. All sorts of associative thoughts will come in response to the sound. I want you to notice body sensation of a feeling nature or even just a tangible physical nature in the body to these sounds.

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Now I'm going to play some sounds for you. All sorts of associative thoughts will come in response to the sound. I want you to notice body sensation of a feeling nature or even just a tangible physical nature in the body to these sounds. Now I'm going to play some sounds for you. All sorts of associative thoughts will come in response to the sound. Now I'm going to play some sounds for you. All sorts of associative thoughts will come in response to the sound.

Turn into your body. Part of this is learning where your feeling centers are. Different sounds are going to evoke different kinds of emotional feel. There may be chatter, commentary in the head or visual impression, but try to keep your awareness in the body. Now I'm going to play some sounds for you.

All sorts of associative thoughts will come in response to the sound. Rock-a-bye baby on the treetop. When the wind blows, the cradle will rock. Rock-a-bye baby on the treetop. When the wind blows, the cradle will rock. Rock-a-bye baby on the treetop.

Rock-a-bye baby on the treetop. Notice what you're feeling in your body now that you weren't when we started the meditation. You don't have to be able to identify what the feeling is, what the emotion is, but notice any part of your body that feels pressure moving, different qualities of sensation. Notice if there's a tightening around it. See if you could relax the body and allow it to flow through like weather.

Emotions are like weather, just allowing it to flow through like the sound from the outside. Mmm. What do you feel where in the body? What do you feel where in the body? What do you feel where in the body? What do you feel where in the body? Allow image and chatter in the head to be in the background. Keep the awareness on body sensation.

Noticing what you feel where. Allowing sounds from the outside to come in and stimulate experience in the body. Extending our awareness to that sensorial experience. Allowing sounds from the outside to come in and stimulate experience in the body. Allowing sounds from the outside to come in and stimulate experience in the body. Allowing sounds from the outside to come in and stimulate experience in the body. Allowing sounds from the outside to come in and stimulate experience in the body. Allowing sounds from the outside to come in and stimulate experience in the body.

Do you feel something different in the body now? Where do you feel it? Now you just had a little exercise. In that you probably had at least a few different emotional responses to certain sounds that were played. And the opportunity to notice where and how sensation in the body arose connected to that emotional response, whether subtle or quite apparent. Now I'd like you to bring your awareness to where you hear the voice in your head, up towards the ears or around the head, wherever it is, and I'd like you to find a word, a couple words, a phrase, a sound, a syllable, to say to yourself in your head, to help you really tune in to where this location is. The words can be of a neutral or positive meaning. And just say the word or words, elongating the vowel and then taking a little space in between.

Just to tune in to where that location is in your head, to really hear in. And now I'd like you to pick a word. Pick content of the words.

Pick something positive. Could be an affirmation, could be a prayer, could be a name, could be just two or however many words or word or words that seem beautiful or inspiring or loving to you. And really listen in to the word in your head, word or words in your head, just like we listened out to sound.

But also noticing any feeling response in the body to that word or words. Okay. Now let that go and just listen at that location. Talk may arise. Sometimes just looking at talk makes it disappear unless we're deliberately evoking it. For some people, just bringing your awareness to that location will make all talk cease.

Not for other people. But just rest your awareness at that location and you may get clear words. You may have a subtle rumbling. Maybe you can hear words but it's like behind a door where you can hear the tone but you don't know what the words are. Or maybe it's quiet and there are no words and then just enjoy the peacefulness of that. But just have some awareness in talk space whether it's clear, subtle or none in terms of activity. If it's helpful for keeping your awareness there, you could even label clear when you hear clear talk, subtle when there's anything that isn't clear and none or quiet when there's no talk happening in your head. Clear, subtle, none. Wow! Now, keeping some awareness in the body, what we've been doing for the majority of this meditation, noticing sensations of emotional response.

It may be neutral, there may be subtle things happening, you may be activated from any of the sounds that we heard. But keep some awareness there and some awareness in talk space, wherever that is for you. Just for a few moments, we're going to hold the two in awareness at the same time. You may feel a subtle little bubbling, percling in one and maybe a little rise in something in the other. It may be nothing you could describe or even understand what it is, that's fine.

This is the first time checking it out. It may all be quite murky with some groping. Just paying attention at all gives you gold stars on your chart. Notice that process of sensory clarity, of tuning in to what's really going on behind the curtain. If I can, attention.

Now, for the last few moments, we're going to play with deliberately evoking certain kinds of talk in the head, just for you to tune in to the response to the sound on the inside, just like we tuned in to the response to the sound on the outside. I'd like you to think of a word or words or phrase, of something that's a bit of a challenge for you. You pick something that you would like to work with at this time. So it doesn't have to be the most difficult thing that you could possibly think of in your life.

Just anything that might be a bit of a challenge to work with. Interactive talk of whatever kind. Hear it. Feel the body's response to it. It will probably be a very familiar sensation. And while you're doing this, see if you can relax the body with every breath out, letting go of tension so that whatever arises doesn't get stuck, can just flow through. It's like ringing a bell.

It will ring and then it stops. Now, let go of that talk. The feeling may go when you let go of the talk. The feeling may linger. Just hear the sounds present right now.

Allow them to flow through your body. Now I'd like you to think of a tune, a song, any bit of music with accompaniment from the outside. Any bit of music you find pleasant, that you like listening to, that you listen to a lot, that you haven't listened to in a long time. Even if it's just a couple measures of it, and sing it to yourself in your head, the part you like. Notice the body's response to the tune. And let the tune go, keeping some awareness in talk space, some awareness in the feel centers of your body. And the last thing we will evoke is something positive, something that feels good to you. Word, words, phrase, name, prayer, mantra. Something that makes you feel good, whether it's love-based, humor-based, inspiring, comforting.

And hear those words, and feel what happens in your body. Right. Okay, good work. Take a nice deep breath in and on the breath out, let it all go. Just feel what it feels like to sit here right now and you don't have to do anything.

You don't have to focus in any way. Just sitting. Letting nature do the work. Let yourself be meditated. Be ready. you. .

## HARVARD BRAIN STUDY - "LAST CIRCLE"

Here we go. So this will be I guess saying goodbye or hello or whatever this will be. Well, hello and goodbye. There we go. I just wanted to go around. Bye.

So we have, there we are. Namaste. Namaste.

Thanks for great study. This is good. Good idea. There we are. Adios. Alright.

Oh, there we go. Hi. Alright. Thanks. Bye.

## HEBREW PRAYER a la SHINZEN YOUNG

So, sometimes during the Metta, I like to do a chant.

This is the chant that I do. So I wanted to explain what it means. Like I say, I'm not sure whether I do it or not.

It's sort of like spur of the moment. But if you ever hear me do this chant, I want to make sure everybody understands that it's a spiritual, not political statement. This is one of the main Hebrew prayers that my rabbi used to say all the time. That's why I internalized it when I was a little boy.

But I like it because it can be given a really deep interpretation. Excuse me while I let my whistle. Shintzen, are you using that instead of the whiteboard? It was just lighter to carry over. Can people see it? If not, I guess you'll have to... This particular thing, unless you read Hebrew, may not be all that relevant. You know, if you sort of squint your eyes a little bit, it looks like Tibetan. That's not a coincidence.

Can you believe that? That is not a coincidence. Tibetan is derived from Devanagari script of India. Devanagari script of India is derived from the Aramaic script, which has its origin in what is now called Lebanon. And so does Hebrew, and so does Greek, and therefore Latin, and therefore our alphabet also. Alphabet was only invented once. It's one of the most extraordinary cases of cultural diffusion known. Some years ago, some very clever people in what is now Lebanon figured out the concept of alphabet. And it spread by diffusion all the way to Japan and Indonesia, and all the way to England.

Just went around the whole eastern hemisphere, basically. They all go back to one source. That's why alphabet from alpha, beta, gamma, delta, in Greek, aleph, bet, gimel, daled. Okay, ain't a coincidence. Anyway, this is Hebrew letters. And it says, I hope I didn't screw it up. I did it from memory. Oseh shalom bimromav hu ya'aseh shalom aleinu ve'al kol Yisrael ve'imru.

Amen. So this has this word, shin-lamet-men. This is a really, really interesting three syllables. The Arabic pronunciation is shalom. The Hebrew pronunciation is shalom. Usually understood as peace, but it means a lot more.

A lot more. I'm not going to do it now, but in the past I've given an entire talk about how the entire path can be described in terms of permutations of these three letters. Essentially it's not just peace. It's peace that comes through completeness. Shalom means complete as an adjective. And so when you have a complete experience of something, okay, when you are complete with it, where does that lead to? It leads to the absolute peace of zero. So the process of completing leads to this peace.

And furthermore, it has a connotation of safety and well-being. It's all sort of there. The Afro-Asiatic languages, of which Hebrew is one, and so is Arabic, and so is Ancient Egyptian, they have a very different structure. There's three consonants, and then vowels and other consonants are permuted around that or positioned around that to create words and grammatical forms. So just the shilam alone, and then you could put vowels in different places.

You can make shalom, you can make Islam, Muslim, and so forth. So anyway, this is a special kind of peace that comes about in my way of thinking through doing the activity of whatever it is. And sure enough, okay, this means doing, okay? So may he or it who creates absolute peace, who is creating, actually this is a present participle, may the one who is creating the peace of heaven bring peace to you, ve'al kol Yisrael, that's the part I wanted to talk about, and upon all of Israel's. So in my way of understanding, which is the way I

choose to understand, Yisrael doesn't refer to a tribe or a nation. I like to think of it as the sangha, the community who struggles for spirituality, because actually Yisrael, if you remember the story of Jacob's ladder, et cetera, Yisrael is from a root that means to struggle. So I interpret this as meaning to struggle to get to God, okay? So it has no political or ethnic connotations for me whatsoever within this statement, because I cannot imagine any kind of blessing that is limited to one nation or one ethnos. So just wanted to make that clear. Ve'al kol Yisrael, ve'imru and say, that should be over there, amen, which you know from English, amen, so be it, something like that. So if you ever hear me sing this during the Metta, you'll know what it refers to, because it has a lot of deep meaning. So just wanted to mention that.

## How & Why Shinzen Became a Monk

So you were ordained a monk at Mount Koya in the Xiong'an tradition, right? Correct. Is that something you always wanted to do since you were a kid? No, not really. What I always wanted to do since I was a kid was be a samurai. I saw in the 50s Japanese samurai movies when I was in middle school. And I just got fascinated with the whole Japanese culture thing. And that led to my learning the Japanese language in LA, going to Japanese ethnic school in addition to American public school. And that got me to Japan in my senior year at UCLA where I was an Asian language major. And I encountered real-life Buddhist monks, but my interest in them was just because it was the closest thing to ancient Japan that still exists. In other words, in the temples, I mean they have telephones and electricity and all that, but it's sort of like the old days, right? So I was fascinated with it.

That would be the closest that I could get. Did they have swords? No, only the wisdom sword. So I was hanging out in Buddhist temples just to sort of live as close as I could the fantasy of ancient Japan. But I wasn't meditating because that's the last thing in the world I had a proclivity to do. I was scattered and impatient and wimpy and all those things. So I was just hanging out, having fun in the temple.

But I had a sense that they knew a kind of secret that they would be willing to share, but they would never push on me. So when I got back to the United States, I was graduating from UCLA and I thought, well, I want to go to graduate school. I want it to be related to Asia. I'll study Buddhism because you need a lot of esoteric languages for that, and I was good at languages and so forth. So I was going to become an academician, a professional scholar of Buddhism.

I passed my prelims for a PhD at the University of Wisconsin. So they sent me back to Japan to do research on a topic. I decided to pick the Shingon School of Buddhism, which is the Japanese version of Vajrayana practice, also known as Tantric Buddhism, Esoteric Buddhism. I chose that because although many Westerners at that time were studying the Tibetan forms of Vajrayana practice, no one knew about or was studying the practice as it had been preserved in Japan for a thousand years. So I thought, okay, I'll make this my academic bailiwick, my specialty.

I'll be the expert in the Western world on the Japanese version of Vajrayana practice. So I went there with that in mind, with that goal. But when I got there, they wouldn't teach me anything because it's for self-transformation, not just as an intellectual curiosity. So they said the only way that I could learn it is if I was willing to become a monk and live in the temple. So in order to be able to write my PhD thesis, I... You became a monk just so you could write your PhD thesis? Pretty much.

But what happened is that my motivation shifted once I started to live in the temple and once I started to get some instruction in the practice, I realized there was a huge potential there for me personally. So they were very clever. They put me in this situation that turned me around. And then something happened, something happened in my personal life that pretty much blew me away emotionally and pointed out to me the absolute necessity of seeing beyond the body and the mind. And that happened while I was in that first year that I was a monk there in Japan.

And that just changed everything for me. When I was in graduate school at Wisconsin, my hero was my graduate advisor. His name was Richard Robinson. And he was an intellectual giant, just an intellectual giant is all I could say. He could make puns in three languages simultaneously. His specialty was Buddhist logic. Yes, there is something called Buddhist logic. It's Aristotelian syllogistic logic that was used in the Madhyamaka school of Nagarjuna. Somewhat along the lines that the Greek Zeno school and so forth used logic to

sort of show people beyond the world. What's beyond the world? Anyway, he was a master of that.

And while I was a monk, I got this letter from the United States. He had been injured in a bizarre and horrific accident. A fuse blew out in his house and he went down to change it and there was no source of electricity. So to light, he struck a match and there had been a gas leak there and it went up like a soccer torch and just burns all over his body and horrifically, if he had lived, he would have been horrifically deformed. He just suffered in agony for a month and then died. I thought to myself, what good is all that knowledge? What good is all that intelligence if this can happen at any time to a person? That made it real for me and gave me the motivation to want to see beyond the limited identity with the body and the mind.



## How a Living Bodhisatva Influenced Shinzen Young

Some of you know, some of you actually knew Nicola Geiger before she passed away.

So this is a woman that I met in Japan who was German and had lived through World War II as part of the resistance to the Nazis. They even made a movie about the group called The White Rose. So she had to go, it was like Schindler's List, you know, I mean, she lived it. She was only 20 years old at the time. And she'd just been through everything. I mean, she'd been tortured, interrogated, raped, you name it.

It had happened many times. So I met up with her. I didn't know who she was or whatever.

But she said, well, if you ever come to Kyoto, come visit me. She was running Friends World College, which is a Quaker college that has campuses all over the world. And she was interestingly engaged, she worked for Amnesty International. She was in fact their specialist on human rights violations in South Korea, which at that time was very bad on human rights violations. And she was actually like, it was like this, it was very cinematic. I mean, she was engaged in like secret espionage stuff because she was trying to save the life of Kim Dae-jung.

Now, you may or may not know the whole story, but eventually Kim Dae-jung became the president of South Korea and Korea became democratized. But he was in prison at that time. And she was doing all sorts of stuff with Amnesty International to make sure that he didn't get killed. So she was like, you know, you would think someone that had been through that themselves would want to sort of distance themselves, right? But no.

Anyway. So how this relates to challenges and what have you is, so she says, come visit me if you're ever in Kyoto. So I was in Kyoto, I came to visit her. And she said, come up to my living room here. Sit down. Do you know why I invited you to come here? I said, no. And then she proceeded to tell me exactly where I was at in meditation and what I needed to do to take the next step.

That was sort of surprising. But then later on, after I knew her story, she had been trained to meditate from the time that she was three years old. Her father had been a meditator and they were associated with Hermann Hesse and the League of the Journeymen to the East and this whole group of Europeans that were interested in sort of Buddhist kinds of things during the Weimar Republic. Anyway so I mean she'd been trained, that's why she survived all that stuff and prospered. She had enlightenment experiences while these horrible things were going on to her. So eventually it became evident why she had this perspicacity to see through you, literally. So anyway, apropos of challenge, what she pointed out to me was that I didn't like people and that I withdrew from people and that I was going to have to learn to like being around people.

It was true. I had spent my entire life as a loner. I was very uncomfortable around people. What I have in her was a role model for what she was talking about. She was the first role model. Later on I had others.

But what did she do? Well she just hung out in her house and people would come to be with her. What kind of people? Every kind of person. The entire spectrum of humanity. From the best to the worst. The best being the Zen masters and Catholic priests. She was friends with Father Johnston, for example. And the worst being Yakuza, if you know what that is.

And left wing international terrorists, like the real deal. And everything in between would pass through her living room and she would give each one of them what they needed. So that was a big change in my habit patterns, that I had to learn to love to be around people and be with people. It might not seem like that big a deal, but that was a challenge.

# How a Positive Human Being Emerges from the Source ~

## SHINZEN YOUNG

I was wondering where cultivating positive or identifying positive exists within both gone. Well, the question is, where is positive within both gone? It's not.

That's sort of the whole point. No positive, no negative. This is as close as you get to the non-human as you can get.

However, the great parents, so intrinsically, there is no love, there is no hate there, intrinsically. But still, that's hitting a human being. We're still a human being. And when we get hit by the impersonal, that tends to trigger a sense of deep human love. But it's not intrinsic to the impersonal. It's intrinsic to the fact that you're still a human being. And touching that, which is, as is said, strikes down God and the devil simultaneously.

So you would think, well, that's a little bit more like the devil than God. Because it's like, where's ethics, where's love? But that's the central mystery. When the human touches the non-human, the human is nurtured and improved by way of reaction. So touching the non-human source is, when you come back, the ripples of love are there? That's pretty much it. So then the authentic person is in the source, but not in the ripples of love? Well, the authentic person is the puppeteer.

And the puppet that that invisible hand is inserted into very much will be manifesting love and compassion in the world. So it's the power source. You can think of it on an analogy of broadcasting. So there's the wattage of the station. That's power, that's joules per second.

That's the rate at which energy is going out. However, the wattage is not the only parameter of a radio or TV station. There's a modulation that goes on, on that wattage that carries a message. It could be music, it could be, okay, and it can modulate either amplitude or frequency. But the point is, there's a message that's riding on that energy wave.

It's modulated or encoded. But it's not the energy wave itself. The energy wave is just pure energy. So that's inside the puppet, is that energy wave. But the surface of the puppet should be unapproachable, abstract, admirable, helpful human being. That's what I call classical enlightenment, or class C enlightenment, as opposed to crazy wisdom or other things that people do, where the surface is not necessarily unapproachable, admirable, helpful, and ordinary human being.

So that's how I look at it. So if somebody is in touch with the source and also in touch with being beneficial to other human beings, they're going source here, source here, source here, source here, something like that? Well, you can use different metaphors. You could use an alternating metaphor, but I sort of like the spatial metaphor of there's space inside you that's sort of animating you, anima. There's different possible metaphors. So, yeah, that's one way to think about it.

## How Cho used Shinzen's techniques to work through pain

Can you give an example of maybe a specific way in which you used the techniques for any specific issue? Yes, I found out recently or in the last couple of years that I am either allergic to codeine or it doesn't like me, whatever. And I was having some back issues and my doctor prescribed codeine for me in a Tylenol 3. And I had said to her, I don't think I can take codeine because years ago when I was experiencing gallbladder problems, I started having extreme stomach issues with it. And she said, oh, that was probably your gallbladder.

Well, it wasn't. In the middle of the night, my stomach went into an extreme spasm and I immediately started doing my practice. It escalated and yes, it became much more difficult. I actually sent my husband downstairs to get a CD that was how to deal with pain or like I wanted Shinzen to guide me. And while it was extremely difficult, I think it really, really helped. I spoke with him after that because even after my years of meditation, I thought I could do better at it.

But he was very kind and said, you know, until some of these really, really big issues hit us, you don't know what you would have been if you didn't have the practice. Can you give an example of what you specifically did on that night? I did two things. I did the focus away from the pain and I also focused on.

I needed both. Shinzen's techniques, when you're focusing away, I was looking for restful spaces within my body, within my talk space. I was focusing away from the pain by trying to find the relaxed rest spot so that the pain wasn't so intense.

And then when it would get to the point where the focus, I had to focus on it, then I was using focus on the pain and I was watching the intensity, the shape, whether it was sharp or dull, whether it moved, was there a color to it that I could focus on to sort of, and that, you know, that allows the pain to spread more and be less intense in one area. That's what I did. I ended up going to the emergency anyway, but. Everything worked out. So, yes, it's a coding, something you just have to work out of your system.

# How Continuity of Practice Will Help you Catch Fire ~ Shinzen

## Young

I'd like to start with just a couple practical suggestions in terms of getting the most out of the retreat. I like to distinguish formal practice from what I call practice in life. By formal practice I mean a situation where you're attempting to maintain a continuity of technique of some sort. It could be done in stillness, seated, standing, lying down, or it could be done in motion, simple motion or more complex motions, exercise kind of motions, even doing tasks, those kinds of things. But what characterizes formal practice is that it's all about maintaining whatever that technique is.

If it's a technique that involves noting, then you're continually noting unbroken. By way of contrast, in daily life often it's not feasible to do that. We have to take care of business, we have to allocate time and energy to think about stuff and to deal with situations. So we typically in daily life can't have most of our energy focused on maintaining a continuity of technique intentionally. Of course, as you know, I define mindful awareness practices as practices that significantly elevate your base level of mindfulness. I define base level of mindfulness to mean how mindful a person is under ordinary circumstances when they're not particularly trying to be mindful. So as a result of practice, your base level of mindfulness should be elevated. Even when you're just sort of bopping around taking care of business, thinking about this, talking about that, over the months, years, decades of practice, you should notice that just on autopilot you're much more mindful, even though you aren't necessarily intentionally trying to implement a technique. So for daily life, what I encourage is something that I call, quote, practice in life, which means that when it's feasible, 30 seconds here, 3 minutes there, you implement a formal technique.

When it's feasible means, well, you get a little hiatus. Maybe you're an office worker, you have to sit there, you have to think, plan, have meetings, etc. But then you walk to the washroom or you're in a meeting where your full attention is not really required. And it's like, okay, I'm going to do a few minutes of practice here, I'm going to do a few minutes of practice there. And so you pepper the day with little micro hits. I usually encourage people to have at least a half dozen, as I say, in daily life, under ordinary circumstances, at least a half dozen little hits like that during the day where it's feasible, you're in a simple situation, you're waiting or what have you. Okay, now I'm going to do a technique and then just go back to taking care of business. Now, if you make a Herculean resolve to really implement a technique for those 30 seconds or for those 3 minutes, you can actually meditate retroactively. I know that seems oxymoronic, meaning contradiction by nature.

Okay, oxymoron is something that is contradictory by nature. Mindfulness is in the moment. How can you possibly have retroactive mindfulness? Well, here's what I mean by retroactive mindfulness. As you're just bopping around taking care of business, not particularly implementing any intentional technique, you're stirring up the samskaras. Now if you then stop on a dime and implement a practice, you can replace quantity with quality. It takes a huge resolve to do that, though.

You have to really decide you're going to do that. And then all those juices that got stimulated, that got stirred up as you were just being ordinary and not even remembering that you're a meditator necessarily, you can process all of that in 30 seconds or in 3 minutes if you really decide you're going to bring all you got to those few minutes of peppering the day. So you sort of get, if you fully process the juices that got stirred up by ordinary life, then in a sense you meditated retroactively because you sort of, you've cleaned up or broken up forces that got stirred up as you were just going about life. So practice, there's

formal practice, continuity of technique, and then there's practice in life. And I divide formal practice into stillness and then in motion. So success on this path is likely to happen if you alternate day-to-day practice with retreats.

So here we are at a retreat. In day-to-day practice, there's a little bit of formal practice that you do. Some people do an hour, some people do a half hour, some people do less. There's a little bit of formal practice and then it's mostly, okay, just going about life and hopefully you'll remember to pepper it with life, with some practice during the day.

So on a retreat, it's a figure of reversal. Basically what you should aim for is from the instant you wake up in the morning to the instant you lose consciousness at night, for the great majority of that time, you are doing formal practice. Either you're sitting or you're moving, and moving could be walking, it could be stretching, it could be taking a shower, it could be eating your meal. But you try to maintain a continuity of practice. The one exception to that, which would be more like a practice in life situation, is what we're doing right now. It's fine with me if you are entering formless samadhi as I'm talking and maintaining a formal practice and not listening to me in terms of content.

That's fine. But you may want to listen to some of this content also, in which case it's a little bit of going back and forth. Or maybe you're mostly just listening to listen and it's just like ordinary things. So interviews, group process, that kind of stuff, that's a practice in life situation where you go in and out of technique as you wish. But other than those times, all the other times, chanting, waiting for me to get here, you know, what have you, putting your clothes on, taking a shower, try, if you can, to have a well-defined technique going.

What technique? It doesn't matter. Whatever appeals to you under different circumstances. There's sort of like two kinds of people on this planet. There's the way most people are, and then there are people that think about their day in terms of opportunities to cultivate and apply their mindfulness skills.

It's just a whole different way to approach life. Many of you have probably read the Don Juan books, the Carlos Castaneda books, teachings of Don Juan and so forth. If you haven't, there are these great classic, it was written by an anthropologist from UCLA who started to study a Yaqui Indian who lived in Arizona and in Mexico as an ethnographic study and eventually, even though he was a scientist and a modern anthropologist, he actually got pulled into the cultural view of that Indian and stopped being an anthropologist and became a shaman and wrote about it. But anyway, the native teacher that he calls Don Juan, that's not the guy's real name, but that person was not just a medicine person.

It was not just a power healer kind of person. It's absolutely evident, abundantly evident when you read that material that Don Juan knows about impermanence, no self, and emptiness. He has the liberated consciousness, which can result from those traditional practices in some cases.

So the reason I'm mentioning this is there's a lot of incredible sound bites in those writings. One of the things that Don Juan told Carlos was the ordinary person thinks about their life, everything in life, in terms of fortune and misfortune. But the person who sees thinks about everything that happens in life as an opportunity, a challenge, a challenge to apply and develop a certain state of consciousness. So becoming that kind of person that sort of thinks of life that way, you can still acknowledge fortune and misfortune, but the day is more or less about cultivation. So that's really desirable.

It's really desirable to become that kind of person. One of the Zen masters said that the average person is used 24 hours a day, but the person of Zen uses 24 hours a day. So on retreats, it's good if, other than the few times that we're sort of talking and interacting and that kind of thing, other than that, I would strongly encourage you to attempt unbroken formal practice.

So basically the whole day is just one practice period. I did a two month retreat many years ago with Upendita, who was Mahasi Sayadaw's sort of heir apparent. And this is a traditional Mahasi retreat.

Some of you have done those kinds of retreats. You know, everything, and I mean everything, is done in slow motion. And there's almost this, a little bit of one-upmanship, who could be the last person to get to the dining hall? Now mind you, the dining hall is only about 30 yards from the meditation hall. And there were people that, you know, it was 45 minutes by the time I got there. This is everything, okay? So it's a two month retreat, so you know, occasionally you have to do laundry or whatever. It's like, so you're doing your laundry in slow motion. Two hours, do your laundry.

And by the way, that's just three pairs of underpants. So it's absolutely continuous practice. Sit walk sit walk sit walk walk sit walk sit eat sit walk sit walk like that. And that's all you do all day.

They suggest that you sleep for four hours, so that leaves 20 hours of noting practice to do every single day for two months. It's incredible. So just try to, as I say, try to keep things going and be that person that sort of strategizes. Okay, chanting. How am I going to focus? How, it's, you'll have a clear-cut strategy. It could be a lot of things. Maybe it's a focus out. You're going to listen to the sound. You're going to merge with the sound. Or maybe you're going to merge with the physicality of the breathing of the chanting.

Or maybe it's a nurture positive. After all, that's what chanting originally was. The mantras and so forth. You did visualization. You got the mantra going. Or maybe it's like a flow. Or you're grok on how the chanting induces restful states. Really a lot of our agitation is mental talk. And either an internal or an external chanting kind of thing.

The mental talk tends to go in all different directions. But if you set up a kind of rhythm in talk space where you're going, om mani padme hum, om mani padme hum, over and over again. So what that rhythm does is it's like a comb. If your mind is like hair that wants to be a bad hair day and go in all directions, but you're constantly combing through it these times of om mani padme hum, these syllables, they make it difficult for the mind hair to fly in all different directions. That's to induce a here rest experience relatively. Even when your mind is wandering during chanting, you'll notice it can't wander as fast or as big.

So you can go into see rest, hear rest, feel rest. Or you can go into flow states. There's a lot of possibilities. Those of you that are familiar with the range of techniques.

You sort of decide on how you want to do it. This morning for myself, for example, I was doing expansion contraction. Oh, it was so cool. It was in all three modalities, inner and outer. It's just the whole thing was just like simultaneously expanding, contracting.

It just sort of opened. That was like an interest, opportunity, necessity, right? So it's like, okay, I think I'm going to go with this plan this morning. And like, okay, that's the strategy. At other times, you might want to do other things.

So how am I going to practice when I'm taking a shower? Or when I'm doing my meal? Fortunately, you get lots of chance to even get guidance specifically on that. So that attitude of, okay, it's like, keep the continuity, I would strongly encourage that. But one of the metaphors that the Buddha used for success with practice is he compared it to getting fire by rubbing sticks together, actually. He said, in other words, it's an emphasis on continuity. So if you rub and then you like stop, and then you rub and then you stop, well, it's not going to develop something that catches fire. So retreat is a situation where you can sort of catch fire with things by keeping a continuity of practice going. So that's something that I think would be good to consider and think about and try to achieve.

## How do I know which kind of meditation is best for me? ~

### Shinzen Young

Meditation is a way to get to know yourself. Meditation is a way to get to know yourself. Now there's different kinds of meditation. Somebody says, hi, I'm looking at a candle.

Somebody else is saying, what's the sound of one hand clapping or whatever. What's the difference really in them and what distinguishes them or what's an advantage? How do I know which one I want to do? It's a matter of trial and error, I would say. Read about the different traditions and you see which way of working appeals to you intellectually.

You also check out different teachers, see their teaching style, their personality, their emphasis. They're all different. Some are very heartfelt. Some are very intellectually clear and precise. Like you? Yeah, I'm more the, as T.S. Eliot would have said, the sharp compassion of the healer's art.

Maybe a little bit less on the heartfelt side. Everybody has their specialty. So you check out the intellectual model. You check out the personality of the teacher or teachers. You can have more than one teacher. Is that confusing to have more than one teacher? It depends. For some people that is confusing, but some people are naturally bi-spiritual or poly-spiritual. You can be bi or poly. For those people it's not confusing.

The main difference in the different meditation traditions is what do they have you focus on? How do they have you build the concentration? Typically, concentration power is built by giving somebody an object to focus on. Then when their attention wanders, they bring it back. Then it wanders again, and they bring it back over and over again. I say typically because there are exceptions where you don't actually have an object that you focus on. But that's pretty specialized. Most forms of meditation will give you an object. By an object, could you tell me what you mean? A sensory experience of some sort.

I'll give you a range of possibilities. Typical sensory experiences a person might focus on are the physical sensations of breathing, which would be a body sensation that is specific and physical. The physical sensation of breathing is one common object.

External sound is another common object. You can do it with music, for example. Some people do a music-based meditation. You focus on music as a meditation.

Yes, on the sound of the music. Another sensory experience could be, as you mentioned, something that's external sight, like a flower or a candle. Your attention wanders, you bring it back. The object could be an internal sound of a mantra, which is any syllable, word, phrase, sentence that you repeat over and over again. That could be an object. It could be an internal image. For example, some people like to visualize a sphere of light or something like that that they would look at, or a blank extent of brightness or darkness. That would be an image-type thing.

Does it matter which one of these you do? Is there an advantage to looking at a sphere of light versus listening to music? Let me list a few more, and then we'll talk about the relative advantages and disadvantages. Let's see. We could have touch. We could have sight, sound. We could have mental image. We could have an internal talk, but in the form of a syllable or word or sentence that is repeated over and over again, which would tend to cool out talk space, your internal chattering. That's called mantra in Sanskrit, but the Christians used it too.

Most of the traditions used it. That's image talk. You could even focus on an emotional sensation, like a pleasant emotional feeling in your body, like love or something like that. Certain kinds of physical touches, sight, external sights, external sounds, mental images, certain kinds of internal talk, certain kinds of emotional feel in the body, would be typical objects that a person might take as a concentration.

Just like everything. Potentially anything, because you're training a generic skill. It does have to be based on sensory experience. You pick a sensory experience, your attention will wander, it will be pulled elsewhere, you bring it back, you wander, bring it back. Each time you bring it back, it's like lifting a weight, you're strengthening your muscles, you may get tired, but in the end your muscles get strong if you do that consistently. That's how most kinds of meditation work, not every kind.

There are some formless kinds, but most kinds of meditation will give you an object, your attention wanders, you bring it back. As to the advantages and disadvantages, I would say it very much depends on what appeals to you and what works for you as a person. So try out different things. So would someone move from one to another, like say today I want to listen to music and tune into that experience, and if my mind wanders I come back to the music, and maybe tomorrow I want to watch this light in front of my eyes. Or would someone pick one thing that they're doing and that's what you do every day to build this muscle of concentration? That's an excellent question.

It depends on the tradition you're working in. Because meditations are organized into systems, and each system has an internal consistency that is designed for it. So in some systems you'll be encouraged to, like, okay, it can be today this, tomorrow that, based on some sort of algorithm.

In other systems it will be much more monolithic, no matter what, you always do this kind of thing. Like the breath, I've heard a lot of people who do nothing but watch their breath. Then the answer to the question, what should I focus on, is easy, it's always the same, no matter what comes up, gently return to the breath sensation in your abdomen, nostril, wherever. So it very much depends on the internal consistency of the meditation system that a person is practicing, and the teacher or teachers will tell you how to make those decisions and why. And every meditation teacher should be willing and able to explain to you why they ask you to do things in a certain way.



## How has Shinzen's meditation changed your life? ~ Choshin

So tell me about, how long have you been with Shenzhen? 23 years. My daughter was 3. That's how I keep track and she's 26 now.

Wow. So in 23 years, I'm sure you've had a lot of experience with Shenzhen's techniques. Just off the top of your head, give me an example of how his techniques have changed your life.

There might be many, but just pick one. I have to say that often, things that might have bothered me in the past, barely register on the scale now. So when I talk to people about meditation, I will say it makes my tiny, tiny little things very beautiful or passionate or pleasant. And then things that are huge emotionally, reduce it to something that is very manageable or not there at all.

But I can't imagine people living through some catastrophic things. You know, people have terminal cancer, terminal illness, and I can't imagine my life without this practice to sort of even things out and give me a better perspective on the highs and the lows. All right, you wanted to add one other thing? I wouldn't say the most important, but for me, the understanding of impermanence has been a huge support, I guess, in my life. You know, understanding that things will change, things will go away, you will lose things, you will gain things, and then lose them. That to me has been a really, really helpful thing in my life, not just for losing loved ones, but also feeling equanimous with, well, this is the way it is today, but tomorrow, who knows? So that sort of helped me through the... Through acceptance. Exactly, yeah. And I think it rules my life a lot. I think I probably depend on that a lot.

## How Have People Used Shinzen's YouTube Videos?

Okay, so I'm going to start off with asking you, since our first interview, which was January of 2009, and we are now in January of 2010, and since then you did all these interviews with Harprakash on YouTube, and you've had two whole YouTube channels now full of videos of Shenzhen out in the world. Has this changed anything? Has this affected you in any way, having all this YouTube presence now? It hasn't affected me personally that I'm aware of, but I think what it has done is made a lot of very useful material available to a lot of people, because we seem to be having people using this, and of course we have records of all the usage. I would say as far as me personally, the main impact has been I have a lot of very, very pleasant emotional body sensation at the knowledge that, because of the service that a couple of my students have done for me, yourself and Harprakash, now we've got thousands and thousands of people making use of this, and most of what I have to teach is just there in a very organized format, available 24-7, free to the world, Dharma on demand.

Just gives me pleasant sensations. Have you heard of ways in which people may be using the videos that is helpful? I wouldn't have thought of. There are actually ways that I wouldn't have thought of. I thought people would mostly be using it for conceptual reference occasionally, but apparently people are using it on a consistent basis as a kind of teacher in your home for their day-to-day practice. Got a guru in your pocket, and you're just happy to see me. There we go. Cool, cool.

## How Intense Emotions Can Be No Problem - SHINZEN YOUNG

The ancient Taoists had experienced the same thing and had an interesting phraseology for it. It relates to jing qi shan, which are terms that you may be familiar with if you've studied Asian medicine or martial arts and so forth. So jing means essence, literally. So essence of what? Well, in terms of sensory experience, often in the process of completing an experience, a certain flavor has to sort of get distilled and dominate your awareness. And that distillation of that experience could be described in Chinese as jing, or essence. Now in the Taoist practice, this particular distillation that they often worked with was sexual sensation. But this can be generalized to any kind of experience, and it doesn't necessarily have to be in the body, although it's sort of easiest to understand there, but the same thing can happen in visual and in auditory. You sort of...

everything gets distilled. So let's say, for example, you are working on having fear no longer be an issue for you. How can that be? Because there's so many circumstances of fear in this world, so many legitimate reasons to be afraid.

It just goes on and on and on. How can it be that a human being could become a human being for whom fear is no longer an issue? Broader still. If you can do that, well, why not add in grief and sadness? Or anger? Or on a more mundane note, that frenetic impatience that we have all day, that comes out when you're in a traffic jam? Which is very ordinary, but actually a source of significant suffering in the world. And now at the other extreme, what you would hardly think any human being could ever come to grips with, shame and embarrassment. How about that one? So anger, fear, sadness, embarrassment, impatience, disgust.

Those are the big six on the negative side of flavors of human emotion. I know for sure that a human being can reach the point where those are no longer an issue for them. So how is that possible? How is it possible to do with all of those? How is it possible to do with even one of those? Well, first you have to be willing to allow it to distill into an essence. What that means is that particular flavor, whichever one it is, anger, fear, sadness, each one has its own very distinct quality in the body. So the essence of fear occurs when there is nothing but the fear sensation.

It is in every cubic centimeter of your body, and it is continuous, unbroken in time, for a period of time. Now, we're very, very afraid of what the consequences of that would be. But the fear of the consequences of that is actually what keeps us imprisoned for our whole life. Because the consequences of allowing it to become essence, in the way I've just described, the consequences are nothing negative at all. The long-term consequences are freedom. But because we're afraid to let it go to that point, very few people become free. So if the shit really hits the fan to the point where you cannot avoid one or a combination of these negative emotions becoming essence, well, in a sense that could be a very good thing. So I repeat, there is nothing but that flavor, essentially hardly aware of anything else in the body. It's everywhere, and it's continuous through time. So now you are inundated with the essence of shame, or grief, or fear. Or the impatience associated with being in a traffic jam and you're late to an appointment. That one is just about as hard to work with as all the others.

It took me, oh my God, from the time I realized what the task was, which is what I'm now describing to you, from the time I realized what the task was, to the time where I could actually do it with that impatience thing in traffic and not suffer. Well, I don't want to... Maybe I shouldn't say this. Twenty years. But the twenty years passed anyway.

I know what you're saying, well, I don't have twenty years. But that's another Dharma talk. I'm going to give a talk about aging. But the quick answer is, aging is a natural state of

no-self. So you've got something going for you. But if you're young and have twenty years, well, it might not take you twenty years, but it took me twenty years to get to the point where it really felt good, like liberating, to have that level of essence with impatience. Like I say, if you're already old, you've already got some things going for you, we'll talk about that later.

So there's hope in both cases. So it becomes essence. And then it starts to get sort of liquidy. 化精为气 The essence converts into a kind of energy that is first sort of liquidy and then sort of shimmering and gaseous. And then 化气为善 That becomes this effortless, simultaneous, formless, rich doing of space, spaciousness, effortlessly spreading, effortlessly collapsing. And it's at that point that you have a complete experience of that particular essence. It has now become 善, pure spirit. Now, as I say, they did this traditionally with sexual sensations.

So it's the same process. The sexual sensation inundates the entire body, there's nothing but that. And it's very hard to have equanimity with that.

It's hard to have equanimity with uncomfortable things, but it's also hard to have equanimity with intense pleasures. And then it starts to flow everywhere. And then it's sort of like more gaseous. And then it's just pure space. And that's what the Tibetans called 德同意而美 The non-duality of bliss and void. So if you can go through that phase progression with just a half dozen negatives, it's a small list. Unfortunately, each one of those essences, each one of those flavors, has been honed by Darwin to control animals.

And by Darwin I don't mean the man Darwin, I mean natural selection over millions and millions of years. So it is very hard to allocate all your resources to having a complete experience of these things, because everything in the sensation says, I got to do something about this, I got to do something about this, I got to do something about this, because those sensations have been honed by evolution to make animals do something quickly about something. Either approach it and eat it, or run away from it, etc. etc. Or make love to it, etc. etc.

etc. So it's very hard to just allocate the totality of your resources towards completing. But all you have to do is do that a few times, or well, more than a few times, a few hundred times. And then it becomes habitual. Then for the rest of your life, you will have experiences in your emotional world that are maximally poignant and minimally problematic.

## How is Shinzen's teaching distinctive? Mathematics & "Taking the Mist out of Mysticism."

I'd like to define mindfulness as a three-fold attentional skill set consisting of concentration power, sensory clarity, and equanimity. So to the extent that I am a quote meditation teacher, I teach concentration power because that's universal to any form of meditation. To the extent that I am a mindfulness teacher, I also emphasize the sensory clarity and the equanimity. Then there is the extent to which I sort of have my own distinctive way of going about mindfulness and that definitely has certain distinctive characteristics.

A lot of it goes to my background. I have a pretty solid amateur knowledge of science and mathematics and that has informed the way that I teach mindfulness in a very, very deep way. One of the things that you learn if you get into the physical sciences or mathematics at any kind of depth is you learn habits of precision in expression and thinking. Habits of precision. Of precision.

That's correct. In other words, in ordinary colloquial English, force, impulse, energy, potential, momentum, action, and so forth, they all sort of sound like the same thing and we might use them interchangeably on occasion. But in physics, each one of those words that I mentioned means something completely different and distinct. Each one is defined very, very carefully and in many cases it took centuries for that precision of language to be honed and perfected.

For example, in the area of mathematics, if you take a beginning calculus class, you learn the definition of something called the derivative of a function. I remember that. You took that? I did. I don't remember. I remember those words. I don't remember what they were. You may remember some. You may remember. I remember a volume of a function but I can't remember what it was. Well, you may remember an expression along the lines of, for any epsilon, however small, there is a delta such that if delta is the absolute value of etc., etc., etc.

Sure. Well, anyway, that's the definition. That's part of the definition of the limit of a ratio that's used to define a derivative.

In any event, it's defined with this, it's like incredibly subtle and incredibly complicated and you have to read it over and over and over and over again until it finally sort of registers and then after you've read it about a hundred times, it's like, oh, of course, it's so natural, it's so obvious. Now, what they don't tell you in your beginning calculus book and what would have helped me a lot if they had told me was that that definition of the derivative was not the one that Newton, who invented calculus, used. That was the result of generation upon generation, a good 17, 18, 19, yeah, like a good 250 years after Newton of the finest mathematical minds, Euler, Gauss, Cauchy, Weierstrass. I know most people have never heard of these people but they're among the mathematical geniuses of the Western world. Each one of them contributed something to that definition that the others hadn't seen. That is the distillation of 300 years of contention, discussion, and thinking things over, the end result of which is this incredibly precise, incredibly powerful concept.

Well, you get used to dealing with that level of precision and you get used to the notion that you're going to have to really think about the definitions and read and reread and reread because it's worth it because an ordinary high school student who is willing to come back over and over and over again will be able to understand this as well as those, better than those mathematical geniuses because their stored wisdom is there. I like to think of myself as on a mission to take the mist out of mysticism. I think it can be done. Mist out of

mysticism.

Yup. It can, using mysticism not in the sense of new age airy-fairy but in the sense of classical mystical experience as exists inside the great traditions of the world, essentially contemplative experience. I'm academically, I said that I have a good amateur's knowledge of science and math but I have a professional academic trained knowledge of comparative mysticism and Asian languages and Buddhist studies and so forth. That was my degree in graduate school, my degree program. I sort of bring a very strong scholarship background because of knowing most of the Asian languages in which the technologies of internal exploration of the east are encoded. Then I have this scientific thing which causes me to be extremely precise about how I define terms.

People that work with me have to be willing to put up with that but it saves them a lot of time in the end. How so? Because they're able to eventually communicate and conceptualize the entire path to classical enlightenment precisely in words. That's taking the mist out of mysticism. So you ask me what's distinctive, I bring a scholastic background. I bring a science background. That informs the whole way that I teach. Because I have this sort of broad view of world meditative practice, I've created a system that is a framework within which all of the major innovations in historical innovations in the contemplative technologies from the past, all of those major innovations can be formulated within the framework that I've created. I call it five ways to know yourself as a spiritual being. Each one of those five ways represents a distinct innovation that happened in history but I've reformulated it into modern secular language and placed it all on a universal framework within the mindfulness tradition.

# How Meditation Can Bring an Enlightened Perspective to the 6

## O'Clock News ~ Shinzen Young

How can meditation help you love deeply? Meditation can help you love deeply. And in fact, without it, it's probably going to be very difficult to love deeply, in the sense that I'm using the term. Meditation can also help you act effectively, and there's a lot more to acting effectively than just what meditation can bring.

There's many, many, many specifics. But the one thing that meditation does help, in terms of acting effectively, is it helps our actions to be motivated and directed by our emotions, as opposed to being driven and distorted. When I look out at the world and I see stuff that upsets me, that causes rage, terror, grief, shame, a sense of helplessness, which is pretty much the 6 o'clock news every night, what I try to remember is, in the end, in the deepest analysis, why is this happening? There's surface analysis, and that's important, but for me as an individual, in that moment, the most important thing is to not forget, because it's really easy to forget, not forget deeply why this doo-doo is occurring. And deeply why this doo-doo is occurring, that this doo-doo can be any one of the gazillion things that is the litany of horrors of the 6 o'clock news. Deeply, it's not because human beings get together and try to create bad stuff.

That doesn't happen very often. Human beings get together and try to solve stuff, but the solutions are typically driven and distorted by suffering. And so, they're suboptimal. Now, sometimes that's okay, because one's suboptimal in this way, and the other's suboptimal in this way, and they sort of cancel out, and we sort of muddle through. So, sometimes that's okay, but sometimes, a whole bunch of people will be suboptimal in exactly the same way, and then it reinforces and turns into something horrible. So, I try to remember, okay, how many millions of people for how many decades or centuries experienced rage, grief, shame, terror, and such, just like I'm experiencing right now, and they did not remember to experience it fully.

So, it caused a drivenness, a distortedness in their solution-seeking, and the effect of those bad decisions, a lot of times they just cancel out, it's okay, but if they don't cancel out, they all line up, and we get horrible, horrible things. So, I try to remember in that moment, okay, it may seem like less than a drop in the bucket, but I want to make sure that I'm doing my part at the deepest level to improve the human condition at the deepest level. That doesn't preclude taking action at other levels, but for that moment, when it hits me, I want to be able to have, I want to, metaphor, it's a little maybe humorous or it might sound even cavalier, but I think the secret is the opposite of the James Bond martini. You follow? It's the opposite of the James Bond martini. You want to be stirred, not shaken. So, I try to be stirred and not shaken, and I use the focus in technique, that's in senior field. So, that helps with acting effectively, but I'm not for a moment claiming that that's the totality of acting effectively, but if that component isn't there, then in some subtle way, and you might say, well, it's so subtle it doesn't matter, but I think it matters because it's qualitative, it may not be quantitative, but in some subtle way, I'm just part of the problem. I'm part of what made this. So, the love deeply part of doing something about the world, this practice is very relevant to that. And the act effectively part, it's relevant also, but it's not the whole picture by any means.

# How Much of Buddhism Can Survive the Scrutiny of Science? ~

## Shinzen Young

Traditionally in Buddhism, there's a criterion that the Buddha gave when his students said, how can we know if something is consonant with your teaching? And that criterion is called the pavalakshana. So pava means existence, and if that sounds like the English word be, it's not a coincidence.

So existence. And lakshana is a mark or characteristic. So I said, well, if you teach these three marks of existence, then that's consonant with what all the Buddhas teach.

So if you're interested in these kinds of topics, it's good to actually learn the Pali. So anicca, most of you know that. Can you say it? Anicca. Anatta. Anatta. Dukkha. Dukkha.

So I didn't take AHA. This is the Pali pronunciation. So dukkha is usually translated as suffering, anicca, impermanence, and anatta, no self.

These are the marks of existence. So not everyone in the world thinks Buddhism is right. You can go on the internet and find all sorts of critiques and criticisms of Buddhism. So I think it's important to think very clearly about these kinds of things.

If you want to be able to sort of untangle different things that people say and have productive conversations. So because I'm pretty much a logic and evidence-based guy, I tend to think of myself as a rationalist and empiricist, so I have to ask myself in all honesty, how much of that can survive the critique of science? How much of Buddhism can survive the closest scrutiny and last into this century and last for a long, long time? When I ask myself that question in a very uncensored way, it seems to me that actually quite a bit can survive, which is extraordinary when you think about it, given how old Buddhism is and so forth. I don't think it can all survive, though, the scrutiny of science, but so what? The parts that can survive are enormously useful and powerful.

So time will tell. But let's begin with dukkha, the claim that suffering is, that the nature of existence is suffering. What about this will stem the scrutiny of careful investigation and what might not? Well, first off, we're a little bit hit with a problem, because a major feature in the formulation of dukkha is the assumption that we live multiple lives, that we in fact reincarnate, and that most life forms are uncomfortable.

In the West, there's a tendency to find reincarnation a comforting thought. Oh, I'll be reincarnated. I'm coming back.

I'm coming back. But in India, that is not a comforting thought at all. It's a scary, horrible thought, because Westerners typically always imagine that they're going to come back. Well, first of all, they imagine they have been like Egyptian princesses. I was the advisor to the king, or I was a llama in Tibet. And then the assumption is when I come back, maybe I'll be the president of the United States.

But the Buddhist notion, the traditional Buddhist notion, is that pleasant incarnations are extremely rare. Someone once asked the biophysicist, one of the founders of biophysics, Hal Dane, if he could discern any characteristic of God by having studied the mathematics of biology. Some of you are laughing. His response was very funny. He said, well, apparently God has an inordinate fondness for beetles. There are more beetle species far and away than anything else. So your probability of your next thousand lives being a beetle is very high, whereas being the vizier of the pharaoh or whatever, not very probable at all.



In fact, even a fairly decent life where you get a chance to hear about meditation and maybe practice it, but at least you've heard the dharma, you know what the traditional metaphor for how rare that is? Some of you do. Well, there's a bunch of ones. But there's this piece of wood that's floating in the ocean and has a little hole in it. And there is a turtle in the ocean.

And the probability that when the turtle sticks his head out of the water, it will go through that exact point is the probability that you'll hear the dharma in your next lifetime. Of course, the lesson in that case is use this opportunity, okay? So part of the notion of suffering that's pretty intrinsic in traditional Buddhism and always talked about is most forms of existence are uncomfortable. And so the statement that suffering is the nature of existence is somewhat based on that notion. So is there compelling evidence that in fact we have multiple lives? Not that I can see. On the other hand, if it were to turn out that we have multiple lives, personally I would not be in the slightest surprised. Not in the slightest.

If the Buddhist tradition turns out to be absolutely correct in this regard, it wouldn't surprise me at all. But that's not really the same as compelling evidence. You know, Carl Sagan's thing about extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. Now, does it, is it, how can I put it, does it make, can I understand why someone would think we reincarnate? Absolutely. Because, remember, I've talked several times about these states where you appreciate the full extent of what happens in the deep mind moment by moment, even when you're just processing ordinary sensory experience.

The deep mind in the limit spreads out to encompass this and as far as I can see, all conceivable worlds. It points to that. I'm not saying it literally contains that. But it's a mandala and it's like a fractal and it just, as you sort of look down into that, where it's pointing to is all worlds. And it is, this is called the experience of boundless consciousness. And it's part of the jhana system. But it's nothing mystical schmistical.

It's something you can access just by observing image space very, very carefully, very, very deeply. And it's, you are that, okay? That's all in each of us. And it's very easy to identify with any particular part of that and say, oh yeah, I, you know, I'm that part, I'm that part, because we're all of it. So meditators, people that have looked deeply within, it's not surprising that they would come up with the notion of, well, you jump from life to life based on your behavior, et cetera, et cetera.

So it's not an insignificant perception, and to come to the point where you have that kind of awareness, that depth of contact with how the visual mind works is a very significant stage in practice. However, is that hard-nosed evidence that in fact we reincarnate? Can we show scientists compelling evidence whereby they must accept this doctrine? Not yet. Maybe someday. Maybe never. Now, maybe it's a little shocking to you to hear someone who works within the Buddhist tradition sort of say something like this, but I've been on stage with the Dalai Lama of Tibet, like closer to him than I am to St. Pan right now, and heard him say, if science should someday prove that in fact there is no reincarnation, then we have to modify Buddhism to match that.

That's the Dalai Lama of Tibet, whose entire power base is predicated on this entire system, okay? So, you know, if you want a gripe, don't come to me. He's got my back. Thank God. Thank Gama Lungi De Svava.

I don't know if you ever see him. Now, why bother saying something like this? Well, the reason is because I think a lot can survive the scrutiny of science, and that's important. That's like really important for the future of humanity. So, what about this notion that the nature of suffering, the existence is by nature suffering? To me it's contentious to predicate that on the belief that we reincarnate and that pleasant lives are very rare.

However, let's see what we can say that more or less is not contentious, that no one would disagree with. To what extent is suffering the nature of existence? Well, one of the things

that you learn with this practice is that although pain is unavoidable, physical and emotional pain are unavoidable, suffering is in fact optional. Suffering is what happens when you experience pain without skill. When you have an incomplete experience of pain, it's suffering. To the extent that you start to bring concentration, clarity, and of course equanimity, major factor, to that extent the pain becomes more poignant and less problematic, it still motivates and directs.

It doesn't drive and distort. It's part of the richness of being a human, but it does not haul our existence. So, when you look around and you realize that suffering is optional and then you look at how much suffering there is, you realize that an enormous amount of what people go through from the intrapsychic to the interpersonal to the international level and intercommunity level in between, there is an enormous amount of absolutely avoidable suffering going on. And that's, I think, that gives credence to this view that certainly the nature of existence for people that don't work hard on themselves entails an enormous amount of suffering. So, I think that stands the test of logic and evidence. And it's important to know. It's like hugely important to know. So, there's that.

There's also something else. The Buddhist tradition says that even pleasant things are unpleasant, which seems, maybe doesn't, does not seem to ring true to people. But it's all a matter of, it's relative, I guess might be one way to put it. What people call pleasurable, relative to the experience of complete pleasure, is actually painful.

It's slightly uncomfortable. But you don't realize that until you start to have experiences of complete pleasure. What most people seek in pleasure is intensity, duration, and variety.

Not actually that there's anything wrong with those things. But there's another dimension, which is not the dimension of any of those three, intensity and variety or duration. There's another dimension, which is how fully you experience the pleasure, which is measured by how much concentration, clarity, and equanimity you bring to the pleasure. And once you start to have some experiences that are starting to approach pure pleasure, pleasure unalloyed with craving and aversion and gaps in awareness and unconsciousness, pure pleasure is actually pure fulfillment. And relative to that, when you look back at, quote, ordinary experiences of pleasure that you had as a non-meditator or in the early years of your practice, there's a kind of coagulation and tension around it that is subtly painful. So this is not obvious until you've done a bit of meditation. But I think this is another way in which the Buddhist claim about the suffering nature of things does pass the test of logic and evidence.

Evidence meaning you can check it out yourself and see if it's not true. And relative to nirvana, which is the limit of complete experience, so complete that it is right on the cusp of existence and non-existence, relative to nirvana, everything hurts. Subtly, subtly, subtly, but subtly significant. So actually, I think the Buddhist doctrine does pretty good about the suffering nature of things. There's also the flip side, which is the nature of suffering, which I've already sort of mentioned, at least the way I think about it. The nature of suffering is what happens when we have uncomfortable experiences without concentration, clarity, and equanimity. And it's also what happens when we have neutral experiences without those. And it's also what happens when we have pleasant experiences without those. This is one of the first insights that I had in my meditation career. As you all know, I approached Buddhism in the old-fashioned way.

It was old school. It was Asia. And they made me sit in the full lotus for a full hour, hour after hour. And it was all about pain. It was all about pain.

I thought, this is Looney Tunes. But that's it. Take it or leave it.

That's the way we do it. But it was so worth it, because you're sitting there, and it's getting worse and worse and worse. And then at some point, discrimination, vipassana, seeing separate. You actually see that the pain is one thing, and the fighting with the pain is

another thing.

They are different critters. And before that, you never noticed, because as soon as there was the pain, there was the fighting. So someday, some tricky lawyer is going to do some tort case where they're going to say, well, this person's a Buddhist, so they can only be recompensed for the pain, not the suffering. Because it's always like you get pain and suffering. Oh, I shouldn't put this on the internet.

Someone will actually think of this. OK, hey, you're a Buddhist, right? So we're only going to give you half as much, because you just got the pain. You didn't have the suffering. I can be meditative.

So you can see it. So all my life, until I started to meditate, it's like, well, as soon as I have pain, I have suffering. They're the same thing. And that's why the lawyers ask for pain and suffering if you've had a tort. But now I can see it's like, OK, the pain is one thing, and my mental judgments about it are quite a different thing, and the way my body tightens around it is yet a completely different thing. And oh, yeah, we can relax that tightening, and we can let go of those judgments. And then it's like, does it hurt? Yes, but it's just not the same.

That discrimination, that was worth every moment of what I had to go through. Because otherwise, I never would have known. Who would have thunk it? Pain is one thing. The suffering is something else.

The resistance to the pain is a completely different thing. And when the two come together, you have suffering. So that's the nature of suffering. And then when there's just the pain, without this other stuff, there's less suffering.

And then I extrapolate it. It's like, OK, if diminishing the resistance somewhat causes the suffering to diminish somewhat, then where will this lead? Well, it is theoretically possible that there could be zero resistance, and therefore no suffering at all. And that would apply both to emotional pain and physical pain. So if I only got that one insight in my entire meditation career, it would still be worth the price and admission. Because otherwise, I would have had to live my life without knowing. Oh my god, how does anyone live their life without knowing that? You've got this sort of Damocles hanging over your head.

It can fall down any time. So there's the suffering nature, which I think has maybe not everything that the Buddhist tradition says about that is valid. But I think plenty of it is when you analyze.

There's the suffering nature, and then there's the nature of suffering, which is a very, very useful insight. Anicca. I'm sorry, dukkha. OK, anicca, impermanence. What about that? Well, that's pretty evident, that things don't last. And if we pin 100% of our happiness on things that aren't going to last, then we are definitely setting ourselves up for suffering.

What else is there to say about that? Well, a couple things, actually. One of the criticisms of Buddhism is that, well, because it encourages people to become indifferent to circumstances, objective circumstances, because it's all impermanent. So why bother? Why care? And it doesn't help that the early Buddhist lifestyle was one of renouncing the society and going off and living a sannyasi life. That means you know, when I became a Buddhist monk in Japan, there's quite a little ceremony that you do. You, well, I haven't thought about this for a long time.

What was it? Yeah. Kokuro, fumo, kokuro, uchida. Just remembering in Japanese. So they shave most of your head except for a little piece that they leave, and I get shaved at the ceremony. Okay, so symbolically that's the last thing. And you put on robes for the first time. I haven't thought about this for a long time.

This is like 1970. So the robes have really long sleeves, and I, so they put these robes on you, you know, you complete the ceremony, you get the last little piece of hair is cut off, and then you have to go like to this shrine area and chant some mantras and things. And so I like walked out the door, right, and the first thing I did was catch that sleeve on a post and rip it. Okay, this is mindfulness clothes I've got on. These clothes are designed to make you pay very close attention.

You know, just like as a Buddhist monk. But what I was remembering was that just before they cut off that last hair thing, there are three kakemono. Kakemono in Japanese are those scrolls that hang, you know, or like long rectangular pieces of paper. And you have to bow to each one three times to say goodbye, goodbye forever. And the first one says Fumo, Fumo, right, father and mother. And the second one says Kokuro, Kokuro.

The king of the country or the ruler of the country. And the third one says Uchidami in Japanese. Chinese that would be Jashan, your family gods. And you say goodbye. That represents all of traditional society of ancient times in Asia. You say goodbye to that because now you're in a completely, you are Chuja, you have left Chuke, you have left it all. That's called sannyasa in Sanskrit.

So that was the system that was set up in India because India is a very stereotyped society and has had, had and still has very stereotyped roles. So if you wanted to be a transcendent specialist, there's good news. You can. The society will support you, but you have to shave your head and wear the robes of a criminal. You know, the orange jumpsuits, the criminals. It's the same thing in India. You're just out of the pale of society.

You're just a whole different thing. So because there is that social model in Buddhism, you can see why people, and then because there's this notion, okay, everything's impermanent, so Buddhism must teach people that, to be indifferent to circumstances and the needs of society. I'm criticizing to, in order to answer the critics, okay. This is the stuff that you see on the internet, anti, the things that people that don't like Buddhism, this is the kind of things that they say about it. It's like, because it teaches everything is, any compounded thing is impermanent, so the implication is, why bother about compounded things? And besides, it's sort of the proof of that is these social structure of early Buddhism, which was just say goodbye to the world.

Now just because India at that time had a certain social structure, and that worked for the Buddha, does not mean there is anything intrinsic in the notion of impermanence that says we should be indifferent to circumstances. It just says that we should not pin 100% of our happiness on circumstances, which I think is very reasonable. We should allocate a certain amount of time and energy towards exploring happiness that is not dependent on something that is impermanent.

And unfortunately, that form of happiness actually does exist. You often see a confusion between detachment or indifference with regards to the object of world, and detachment or, I wouldn't even say indifference, I would just say, people confuse that with what I call equanimity. And so my concept of equanimity is designed to answer the critics, and also to clarify things for people that work within the Buddhist tradition. The ability to let sensory experience come and go without push and pull, the ability to do that, I think is a very important ability. That does not mean two things. It does, the ability to allow sensory experience to come and go without involvement, to take a hands-off attitude with regards to the expansion and contraction of sensory experience, that ability does not imply two things that some people think it implies. It is a pretty radical thing, because we're not just talking about bodily sensations, we're talking about mental states also. The ability to allow sense and nonsense to come and go with indifference, the ability to allow physical and emotional pleasure and pain to come and go with indifference with regards to how they expand and contract in your senses, that ability is very useful. But notice I said, the ability to do that.

Because what people think you're saying is that you're advocating walking around all the time stuck on that and that only. Equanimity is an ability. On demand, when it's appropriate to be able to have this hands-off attitude.

At other times, you can absolutely take a stand with regards to your sensory experience. We do it all the time. Every time we do Nurture Positive, we're saying we're selectively attending to positive content. We're not just letting anything come and go.

That's a different practice. And actually, the ability to let negatives come and go in the background helps us selectively attend to positive content. And even to be open to that positive content informing our being, which is the Nurture Positive practice. So, the ability to, when it's appropriate or when you want to, to detach from sense and nonsense in the mind, positive and negative thoughts, let them come and go without carrying, or rather without push and pull. The ability to do that, the ability to let pleasure and pain, physical and emotional come and go, the ability to allow things to congeal and melt without preferences, that is equanimity and that's a hugely useful skill to have.

But it doesn't mean that that's all you ever do just because you have that skill. You can take a stand. You can reject negative thoughts.

In fact, you can do that better if you have that skill. And the other thing that it doesn't imply is that you're indifferent to external circumstances, that you're going to take a hands-off attitude with regards to how your life goes or how the society goes. And I would claim that in fact the ability to not interfere with the way the world makes you feel frees up energy to take a stand, to make the world a better place. So, yes, everything in the world may be ultimately impermanent and therefore to pin your happiness on it is 100% is not a good idea, but you can pin some happiness on it.

There's some limited predictabilities in the world. But you want to have another source of happiness, one that's not dependent on impermanent things. And so that's why I formulated the notion of equanimity. And I always say it's a skill that's a relationship to sensory experience and should never be confused with indifference to circumstances. But there's a deep, deep, deep reason why people do make that confusion.

Because it is not easy to let, to just allow the world to impact on your mind and body without interfering with that impact. It seems like you're going to just die. And it seems like you're going to become passive and ineffectual. In other words, the sensory experience of equanimity at a deep level initially seems like it's going to make you indifferent and therefore vulnerable and irresponsible. And so you're afraid to have complete equanimity. And it's only after you've sort of gone over that hump and you realize, no, it doesn't work that way. Just because I have the ability to experience the litany of horrors that is the six o'clock news so fully that I don't suffer, that does not mean that I stop caring about what I see on television.

In fact, very much the opposite. But some part of us doesn't believe that until we've been over that hump. And so it just holds on. And it's like, no, I can't totally let this have me because then I'm going to be half. So anyway, impermanence.

So what is it that we can have that will be a reliable source of happiness if conditioned things are impermanent? Well, we'll talk about that in a moment. No self. There's a very good reason to define enlightenment in terms of realizing no self. As long as you don't get too caught up in words, because half the world calls that experience the true self.

And if you're caught up in words, then it's like you just miss the point. You can't see the liberation in people that have theistic religions or people that are working within a Hindu context that are talking about realizing the true witness, the true self. You can't see that the Yoga Sutras are talking about the same thing as the Buddhist sutras. You can't see that because the description seems to be the diametric opposite. If Buddhist enlightenment is

no self and someone goes around saying self, self, self, then they must be quite misguided.

No, they've just chosen for very legitimate reasons to call that self. So I would just give that one little caveat. We don't want the litmus test to be certain words. We want the litmus test to be certain experiences. It's been my experience that there are perhaps four different flavors of no self. I like to use this inner system of mental image, mental talk, and body emotion for a lot of different reasons. I like to use that to analyze the experience of self as a sensory system.

Now, there's other ways to chop up that pot. There's the five aggregates, there's the four foundations. You could broadly say, well, anything mind and body is self, et cetera, et cetera. But for various reasons, parsimony and a bunch of other things. Oh, parsimony, that just means simplicity. I like to use that system.

So just for now, we're going to work within that system. I always like to say that the inner see, hear, feel sometimes reacts to the outer sight, sound, touch. Sometimes it goes off proactive, spins memory, plan, fantasy. The individual elements interact with each other. That's why I call it a system.

It's a system. And then every once in a while, the interactivity just turns off. Sometimes it turns off because out expands. There's only a finite amount of real estate in consciousness, so out expands and in contracts. And that's those famous sad stories of master enlighten me.

And the master says, go down! The master says, see, I enlightened you. The idea being for just a moment before there was the reaction. If you just look back, you see the system just went offline.

The inner system was just swamped by the sound. But it's very hard to notice that moment. But if you sit and just sort of watch, either because out expands or just because the system just goes offline, when the interactivity ceases, there's no sense of I. And if you're looking or hearing or touching something external, and that continues unbroken 30 seconds, a minute, two minutes, the inner system does not activate, your identity just goes elastic and you just start inhabiting what was formerly out. So that's one flavor of no self.

Another flavor of no self is, well, the system is activated, but the components at all of their fractal scales are completely untangled. Because remember, it's not just one scale of image, talk, body, emotion. Inside an image is all sorts of subtle talk and body emotion. And inside each one of those strands is like subtle images. And so untangling this multi-scale scheme of inner sensor field is no small deal. But if you get them completely untangled, an emergent property called self is thing vanishes.

And you know I've given several metaphors for that. If you have red and white thread and you just sort of tangle them together and look at it from a distance, it seems to be pink. But then as you get closer and look at what's actually there, the emergent property, the illusory property of pinkness goes away. It's just red and there's white.

So there's sensor field, inner sensor field, mental image, mental talk, body emotion, particularly the self-referential stuff, but in general all of it. And it's all tangled together. With sensory clarity, if at all the scales, not just the surface scale, but at all the scales, if you get those waveforms completely untangled and they are able to interpenetrate without interfering like soliton waves, that gives you an experience of flow self that is... No, no, I'm sorry, that gives you an experience of no self that's based on untangling, on untangling or resolution effect.

And this is the classic description of no self in early Buddhism. It's usually applied to the five aggregates. And I've given many talks, you've heard this many times. It's also done with the four great elements in early Buddhism. There's this shocking description the Buddha gives

of just as a skillful butcher would carve up a steer, and at some point the perception steer goes away and the perception meat arises. That's actually in the Buddhist scriptures.

Clearly they weren't vegetarian 2500 years ago, or at least some were. Okay, so you chop it up and the perception, well, just to extend the metaphor, the perception self goes away and the perception inner seer field clearly arises. And it's not a thing called self. So if we call the turning off of the inner system no self in the sense of N-O, I sometimes jokingly call the no self experience that comes through fully untangling, I call that no self, K-N-O-W, self. You so fully have known the components that it's a no self experience. Then those individual components can show you that they're vibrating super strings.

This of course is just a metaphor. Again, I'm not saying that it's quantum physics, okay. But they're sort of like vibrating super strings. They are vibrating space. And sometimes the whole inner system, even if you can't untangle the strands at all the levels, you get this sense that the surface activity in the inner system has sort of gone away, but there's this undercurrent of shimmering on the mental screen. There's this rumbling in talk space, a kind of idling in the emotional circuits. There's this vibratory flow that's filling the subject in space. If you sort of zoom out, cover that whole space, and just sort of give permission for that inner field to shimmer, that will create another flavor of insight into no self.

And then there is the even deeper experience of what's behind that shimmering field, which is this effortless simultaneous expansion contraction that I talk about every time I talk, almost. This is, Sasaki Roshi called it, Mujo no Hataraki. The activity of impermanence, Kongen no Hataraki, the activity of the source.

Busho no Hataraki, the activity of the Buddha nature. These are just all synonyms. But impermanence is maybe its main name.

Because it's like trying to pin, it's like trying to nail tofu to the wall. As soon as you think it's expansion, it's also contraction. As soon as you think it's contraction, it's also expansion. And it embraces. It is a kind of flow of space.

And there can be a figure ground reversal. Where you say that, well, because that's what's behind all that foam, and that foam is what senior field is made of, then this is what I am. And that's where the irony comes in that we finally come back and answer our question. Well, if conditioned things are impermanent, so we shouldn't pin all of our happiness on that. We can pin some happiness on it. But we should allocate a certain amount of time and energy to finding a happiness and ordering principle that is permanent.

And that's where the little irony can be found. Because it is the activity of impermanence that is our true birthright. And since it does give us an experience of not only the inner senior field, but the outer senior field arising, co-arising. Well, not only does it provide that permanent fulfillment, because even after the mind and body die, to the extent that you've said, I'm not my mind and body, but I am this empty activity that is responsible for my mind and body. To the extent that you've said that many, many times, thousands of times, thousands of times a day, during a lifetime, to that extent, you don't die. You just side-switch.

You just do an end run around the passing away of your mind and body. So a case could be made that therein lies a permanent source of happiness. But because it's not just what molds the inner world, the inner senior field, it molds the outer senior field. So it seems like you're always looking at that with which you share a womb. You're looking at... the fraternity and sorority of creation are in your face constantly. And so that source of personal, permanent happiness is also a constant reminder to care about other people, thus totally giving the lie, totally overcoming the misconception that people that do this practice become indifferent to the plight of others..

## How our Sense of Being Separate Disappears

that rock solid sense that there is a, that your identity ends with your skin. That there is a tangible barrier between inside and outside.

Us versus them, I versus it. It's constantly present in all perceptions. And there's just no escape from it and everybody assumes it's the nature of reality. But after you've ridden on that ox for a while, you cannot escape the opposite of that. You can't escape it. It's in your face 24-7. Everything you see or hear or touch is being loved into existence right in front of you by this activity of the source, this formless womb.



## How Shinzen Became Involved in Native American Spirituality

You do Native American ceremonies. I'd be interested in how you got into that and also how that fits into the Buddhist, the ritual ceremony, how these two practices are compatible for you.

Sure. The way it started was, gee, I'm thinking maybe at least 25, maybe 30 years ago, I was running retreats in the Tucson area at a ranch that was owned by a man named Doug Boyd. Doug Boyd's father is very famous.

His name is Elmer Green, and he's one of the pioneers in brainwave biofeedback, actually. Doug had this ranch that he let us use to run our mindfulness retreats. The first time we did a retreat out there, he came to me at the beginning of the retreat and he said, I grew up in Asia, and I've always wanted to bring good representatives of Asian spirituality together with good representatives of the Native spirituality of this area, the American Indians from this area, the Arizona area.

He tells me he's got a friend named Rupert Encinas, who he describes as a pipe holder, a sweat lodge leader, and a sun dancer. I had no idea what any of those things implied, but the way he said it, it sounded like it was important and a big deal. Then he says, and if you want, at the end of the retreat, he will run a sweat lodge ceremony for your group. I asked him to describe the sweat lodge ceremony, and he did, and it sounded like, oh, that could be interesting. That's what happened. When the retreat was over, we told people, anybody that's interested, you can stay on.

One of the local Native American spiritual leaders named Rupert Encinas is going to take us through a traditional ceremony called the sweat lodge. A bunch of people did elect to stay, so we did this. I remember vividly what that experience was. It impacted at all levels. I was just amazed. I was amazed at how subtle and multi-leveled this thing was. On the surface, it was sort of like just a physical thing. Hey, we're in a sauna here. We're kind of like sweating for maybe even health purposes. It sort of had a surface level of maybe a physical cleansing paradigm. Then at a deeper level, it's a religious ceremony. You're praying and so forth. It's also a group psychotherapy where people are burying their souls.

Men are crying. The boundaries and the inhibitions break down. You're sort of all together in this small hot area.

It's dark. Women are wearing just cotton dresses. Men are in bathing trunks. Very intimate, very close. There are these intense physical sensations from the heat and whatever. It's opening people up.

It's a group psychotherapy. Whatever anybody says, everybody supports them. They say, that's good. Wazhtelo, that's good.

Hechiduktelo, it's like, yeah, so be it. It's like this huge supportive environment where people are just letting all this psychological material out. It's like a group process, a group therapy, group psychotherapy. At another level, it's a shamanic journey because the intensity of the heat and whatever, you're starting to go into the power realms and see spirits and the rocks and so forth. At another level, it matches the Buddhist paradigm of purification equals intensity multiplied by equanimity. You're in this ceremonial context. Within that context, everything has become very simple.

It's very formulaic. There's nothing to do but just open up, be focused and be equanimous with the heat and whatever emotions may be coming up. The basic Buddhist paradigm is intensity plus equanimity equals flavor of purification.

Sure enough, Native people call this a purification ceremony. I could see how it worked at that level. Then, at a symbolic level, it was the whole idea of expansion and contraction, interplay of Father Sky and Mother Earth.

The pipe has the long stem but it has the earth bowl. You could see every single thing that they did had that fundamental sense of a simultaneity of affirmation, negation, expansion, contraction. In other words, it incorporated all of these levels simultaneously into one ceremony.

I remember when it was intense and I'm crawling out and half passed out. The first thought that went through my mind is, and this was a facetious thought, it had a facetious tone. The thought was, oh, this is what they mean by primitive religion. The primitive was in quotes because, of course, it was the antithesis of primitive. It was so multilayered and so subtle and so integrated. I guess when the Europeans came here, they saw that the material culture was primitive.

A stone axe is not as good as a steel axe. They just assumed that the people were primitive in all ways and that their religion was primitive. It was amazing that they were able to do all these things at once woven into this integrated experience. I got out of there and I just knew this is for me.

That's how I got involved. If I were to say the relationship between the Native American path and the Buddhist path, I would say that it's a complementarity. They both move you in the direction of concentration and equanimity. The Buddhist one is sort of like it's very systematic. That's good. It's sort of a very personal experience. It's sort of not all that flamboyant or fun.

You're just sitting there dealing with stuff. Whereas the Native ceremonies are shared. There's a social context. It's fun. You're singing and you're talking and you're, oh, me talk for y'all singing.

You can just let it all hang out. You get to learn another language. You're singing and you're drumming and it's sort of flashy and interesting. I would say for me, the Buddhist practice is the substance that will always be the cake. I like to have some frosting and that's the Native American ceremonies.

## How Shinzen Broke Through an Addiction

There's one other experience that was very dramatic. When I did my first retreat in the U Ba Khin method, which is body sweeping, at that time I'd had a ten year very intense addiction to marijuana, but they won't let you use substances, which is fine. I obeyed that. I was sweeping through my body and I noticed this very subtle little discomfort around my lungs and whatever. No big deal, but I knew it was sort of associated with maybe all the smoke I was putting in there. But nothing intense, no thoughts about it or whatever. When I came back from that retreat, apparently the part of my body that was enjoying the marijuana and the part of my body that was being damaged by the marijuana communicated below the threshold of awareness because I had sort of clarified the body for the body. It had nothing to do with my mind whatsoever. But when I went home, that addiction disappeared spontaneously and never came back. That was very impressive.

It's like, wow. I didn't have to struggle. There was no on the wagon, off the wagon kind of stuff of struggling with it. It was gone. My body had decided. Was this before or after the No Boundaries? After. The No Boundaries doesn't guarantee that your bad habits go away. You spend the rest of your life refining yourself. So I would say, yeah, those four over a period of 40 years, that's like one per decade. Those are good ones though. I take one of those every 10 years.

## How Shinzen Dealt with Travel Dramas ~ Shinzen Young

So, apropos of sharing my stories and my practice, so you sort of got the impression that I was fairly majorly bummed out by my travel fiasco.

So, how did I deal with it, practice wise? Well, one thing is the obvious, when things would come up, I did use the focus him technique. I tend to use that when I'm upset for the obvious reasons. Inevitably, the self returns, right? So, there's two freedoms from the self. Well, there's a lot of freedoms from the self. Many faceted, many, many ways actually. But the two that I like to mostly think about is, well, there's the experience of, quote, all rest, the non-arising of seeing, hearing, feeling.

That actually happens much more frequently than people realize. One of the reasons that I give you these categories is so that you can start to notice that in fact you already are enlightened, at least microscopically. Because if you really pay close attention to the inner activation system, you'll see that there are all rest moments. And that's a relative no-self experience. It may not be clear and intense enough to cause a stream entry or permanent change, but that is a relative moment of no-self. Now, if you happen to catch an intense arising of all three at the very beginning, and you completely quantumize it, and you catch the moment when all three vanish, and subjective space itself collapses to God, then actually you will have a stream entry experience. That's why Sasaki Roshi seems like he's very mean, because he describes how the self arises and passes, and then he makes damn sure that that's going to happen for you by saying things about you in public.

Oh yeah. There's no censoring and there's no mercy in that regard. Because he's just playing a numbers game, hoping that he's got enough students here in America and makes people intensely self-conscious in front of all their friends enough times. Someone's going to have what it takes to actually keep the practice going while that's happening, rather than get into the he said, she said, F you. One form of freedom is, well, it doesn't arise, and you actually notice that.

This also is part of the koan system that uses. So first it's like, okay, when you see the flower, how do you become free from yourself? He wants sea out without any sea in here. And he wants the sea out, it's even itself to be flown. But then the next question is going to be, or not the next, but another one somewhere down the line is, okay, good. It's wonderful. You achieve oneness with flower. Now how do you separate from flower? Some of you are smiling because you actually have this koan.

How do you separate from flower? What does that mean? Does it mean make an object out of the flower? Well, not in the normal sense because the goal is to not need to do that. But what it means is that the judging self does arise. However, it arises as an unfixated flow.

It is completely equanimized. So that even though it is a self as an arising, it is not a self as a thing. And so you've returned to yourself, but it's not really the self.

So my languaging for this is, so, well, I'll tell you another story. I was privileged many years ago to live in the same Vihara, the same Theravada Buddhist monastery as Ananda Maitreya. Ananda Maitreya was sort of the Sasaki Roshi of Theravada Buddhism in some ways. He was the grand old man, he was in his 90s, from Sri Lanka. And I remember seeing him as a much younger person in a BBC documentary called The Longest Journey. It's a documentary where they went around the world and interviewed spiritual leaders. And they interviewed him. And they said, well, could you summarize in a few sentences Buddhism? And he said, well, I can actually summarize it in a few words.

No self, no problem. You might have heard of that. As far as I know, he's the person that originated that. However, I have my little codicil, my version of that. So, no self, no problem.

The non-arising of the self. No self, no problem. But also, no self, no problem. Flow self, no problem. You follow? The self realizes, perhaps with the mentions, perhaps firing on all three syllables.

See, and hear, and see. But it's a flow self. It is a self. And flow and fill the room with its doing.

It's a room-sized personality, which is the diametric opposite of a room-sized ego. So, yeah, I sort of used focus in. Yeah, a little bit to sort of process. But I also did something else, which was more in the line of nurture positive cognition. Entertaining a certain thought pattern.

I think in psychology this is sometimes referred to as an explanatory mechanism. It's like, okay, doo-doo happened. Now, how do you think about it? You think about this like, okay, this doo-doo always happens to me, or the world is, you know, a pit of doo-doo. Or, why am I attracting this doo-doo to myself? Or, well, doo-doo happens and I accept it.

Okay, am I right? In psychology, I think someone's saying yes, that there's a term explanatory style or explanatory mechanism. It's like, how do you use talk space to deal with stuff? So, what I use is *Pratītyasamutpāda*. But it's actually, it's only very minorly in talk space, actually.

Not surprisingly, it's in image space. And I've noticed over the years that this sort of image-based cognitive reframing is coming easier and easier and easier, more and more naturally. And I think it has something to do with the whole sensitizing within the visual field that I described to you that is such a major element in my practice. So, what I think is, I'm putting it into words, but as I say, I'm more see it than think it in words. It's like, okay, well, yeah, it's in words too, though, it's true, now that I'm saying it. It's like, okay, I've been doing this stuff for 40 years, and I always made retreats on time, because I'd leave the day early.

And if there was a problem, you know, then they'd get me there at least by the next day. And then I'm thinking, okay, well, there's really been a deterioration in the whole travel experience. There's the tension in the airport around the security, and are you going to make your flight, and then a lot of the flights get cancelled, and so, what's behind this? Why has there been this deterioration? Well, there's probably many factors, and I'm not exactly an economist or very savvy in the political field, but what comes up to my mind is, well, this is at least partially a consequence of 9-11. And then I ask myself, what was behind 9-11? Well, lots of stuff. Part of it is US policies in the Middle East.

And what's behind that? Now, you all know I love Israel, okay, I go there whenever, but, I don't talk about this stuff, okay, because it's not my area of expertise. I know what it means to know a subject really well. And one of the great things about knowing a subject really well, and by the way, the subject is sensory reality, okay, one of the great things, most people don't have something that they know really well, right, as well as anyone in the world, but I'll tell you one of the great things about that is it leads to a huge sense of humility, because you know what it means to know something really well.

And when I think about all the other things that I would like to pontificate on, like relative to knowing something really well, like what do I know about politics and economics and national policies and how stuff should be run by governments, you know, I know, I can imagine what it would be like to really know that well, but like forget about it, I mean, not even remotely, so that could lead to a certain refreshing humility to realize that sort of militates against the tendency to just want to pontificate on every topic that comes up, like I see people in my health club doing, arguing about politics, oh my god, after the election, it was bloody. Because if you were rooting for the other guy, you were hurting, and there aren't many people in Vermont that were rooting for the other guy. So I really felt sorry for the ones that were, I mean really. So anyway, so let's not go there as far as, but the fact is

that, and what's behind that? Well, the Holocaust, and what's behind that? Well, the way Germany was treated after World War I, which was very abusive, I mean if you look at the history of, oh my god, senior moment. What was the, right after World War I, Versailles, yeah, if you look at what happened at Versailles, if you look at the memoirs of some of those people, they knew that they had sown the seeds for another war. They just knew it, but they couldn't help doing it. They just couldn't stop it, because they just wanted to beat up Germany, get even. So, and what's behind that? Well, all the shit in the 19th century, okay, in Europe, okay.

You know, what the French did when they invaded Germany, okay, wasn't pretty, etc., etc., etc. And you get this sense that there's no one to blame and everyone's to blame. It just, it just put the behind, behind, the behind, and that means that the world sucks. That's not how I perceive it. Remember I said that N means this causality, but it also means connection. So the inconvenience that I go through when I have to travel now, that's my direct, direct touching of all of the above. And it's part of the vastness of my true being. And that's that.

# How to Change Your Life with Mindful Awareness ~Shinzen

## Young

Recently, I've been coming to think of practice in terms of the distinction between formal practice and what I call life practice or practice in life. So each formal practice, what characterizes formal practice is that a period of formal practice lasts at least 10 minutes, so there's a sort of duration aspect, and all your attention is going into maintaining the technique. That makes it formal practice. There are two basic kinds of formal practice, practice in stillness where you're not moving much, and practice in motion where you are moving. You could be walking, you could be exercising, and so forth.

So I would encourage a person who wants to be successful with this path to do a little bit, a minimum of formal practice in stillness and formal practice in motion each day. That's a minimum, 10 minutes. Now that's minimum.

That might sound like not very much, but you'd be surprised how much resistance a person might have to doing that. It's not a time thing. Anybody has 10 minutes here, 10 minutes there to do formal practice.

It's not a time thing. Then what is it? You might say that the ordinary coping mechanism, the normal coping mechanism that people have for dealing with life could be characterized as tighten up and turn away. The new coping mechanism of this practice is the diametric opposite of that. It's open up and turn towards. Now you could think of the old coping mechanism as sort of being like how you've been getting air.

It sort of works, okay, but not really. So if you start to challenge that coping mechanism by forcing yourself to have periods of open up and turn towards, at some point it might seem to your conditioning that you're like being asphyxiated. You got to get a breath of air. In this case, a breath of air is a hit of unconsciousness. The practice is it's like your oxygen is being taken away. Your former source of nutrition is being taken away. You're starving to death.

You're flailing. The only way to get nurtured or to get oxygen is to start to go completely unconscious again for long periods of time. Formal practice won't allow you to go completely unconscious for long periods of time. So it seems like you're starving to death or you're being asphyxiated. That resistance then comes up.

It's not a time thing. It's this other mechanism. So what to do in that case? Well, recycle the reaction.

Get interested in deconstructing the resistance. So in terms of formal practice, 10 minutes of stillness, 10 minutes of motion most days. Practice in life, I've been dividing into what I call micro hits and then background practice. A micro hit is short and it's happening during ordinary life.

At the end of the day, you can say exactly how many of them you did, how long they lasted and when they took place. And that's a way of tracking the extent to which you are stopping on a dime, starting on a dime. So stop on a dime means that you suspend your investment with the content of in and out. You suspend your investment with the pull of past and future. And you establish an investment, 30 seconds here, 3 minutes there, with maintaining a technique. What technique could be any technique? So what's a technique? Name a technique. Hearing. Open it up. Ah, hearing.

Okay. Hearing was the first one. Hear rest, hear rest. There's not going to be much hearing. I'm doing the technique, okay.

After a while, there might be some hearing. But I was just showing you, I could start on a dime. We go a little broader. See out, gone. Feel in, gone.

Feel rest, feel rest, see rest. See out, gone. See out, gone. Feel in, gone.

See rest, see flow, see flow. Okay. No hesitation. No, well, I'm going to sit here and count my breath for 10 minutes and then I'm going to be settled enough to know what's going on.

No, that is not starting on a dime. Ten minutes. Even ten seconds. Ten seconds is too long.

I'd speak, between the stimulus and the response, there is a gap. And it's not long. Couple seconds, maybe. And after that, the terrorists are in the cockpit running the show. Emotional hijack.

Amygdala, amygdala hijack. So we need to train ourselves to stop on a dime, start on a dime. Stop on a dime doesn't necessarily mean that you stop moving around. It means that you instantaneously suspend involvement with the content of in and out. And you are involved with the technique.

But it doesn't have to be long. It can be while you're walking around, even talking to people and so forth. So that's the micro hit.

It can be any technique you want. The places where you would tend to do micro hits during the day are dead times when you're waiting in line or you're in a meeting and it's this vacuous conversation going on that you don't really need all your CPU to look like you're paying attention. So it's sort of like the dead times.

The dead times become the magic times. You're waiting for your system to reboot. I had this idea once to create a Dharma virus that would cause people's computers to suspend operation until I had done 30 seconds.

They have that on a Mac. It's called the beach ball of death. The beach ball of death? The whirling ball when it's having a hard time. That for me is mine. Yeah, right.

So these are the sort of dead times. Then there's the times just before and just after what you think is going to be a stressful event. You can have a stress rehearsal.

Stress rehearsal is stress rehearsal. I have one student that basically his entire life is telephone calls. Most of the calls are telling passionate and powerful people no.

So these are sometimes difficult calls to make. So he can use focus in now. I taught him focus in. Just 30 seconds, okay? He just prepares himself, watches the resistance. It's, oh my God, I'm calling so and so and I'm telling them news they don't want to hear. And then he can just make the call and if there's any after whatever, another 30 seconds, clears it, ready to move on. So before and after stressful things, micro hits. Now the beauty of the concept of micro hit is you can check in on your own practice in a very tangible way. There's no BS, okay, because how many did you do? When did you do them? What was the technique? For how long did they last? That will tell you how many times during the day you are severing the trammels of time. Okay, then what do I mean by background practice or having a background technique? Well a lot of people report something like this. It's like, well I don't go completely unconscious, but I'm not putting a lot of intention in having a technique going, but it's sort of going in the background while I'm going about life activities.

And some people are able to have that going much of the day. It's not sharp, it's not, there's no mental labels or anything, or maybe not much of that, but it's sort of going in the



background as opposed to just the way I used to be where I would just completely be lost and unconscious and driven and so forth. So that kind of thing may or may not come naturally to you.

If it does, it's just something to know about. It's a component of practice. If it doesn't come naturally for you, that's okay. But the one thing everyone can do because it's so well defined and so crisp is the micro hits. Like I say, okay, if you're serious about this practice, you're going to have a half dozen or so micro hits every day. And the less you feel like stopping on a dime, the more powerful doing so is going to be. When you least want to stop on a dime, when you're most caught up in the bondage of past and future, inside and outside, is when it's going to be most powerful to stop on a dime.

You can use spoken labels to ensure quality because it's not going to be quantity, right? It's going to be short if your life situation allows for it. For me, often the stop on a dime feels like I'm going to die. It feels like I'm being marched off to a firing squad or something. And that's good. That means I'm doing it right. That means I really am going toe to toe with the forces of the somethingness of self and world.

So that gives you potentially four elements. Formal practice, practice in life. Formal practice, you have stillness, motion. Practice in life, you have micro hits, background, practice. And with regards to the formal practice, for practice in stillness, two accelerators, trigger practice and duration training.

For practice in motion, the challenge sequence. It's all described in great detail in the reading we sent you. If you line up these elements, if you at least occasionally do the accelerators, push the envelope of the length of a sit at least occasionally, under the parameters described, occasionally explore systematically triggering hot and cold buttons. Try to do not just practice in stillness and not just walking meditation, but can I do focus in while I'm washing the dishes? How deep can I get with focus in while I'm washing the dishes? Focus out on the way to work, et cetera, et cetera. So you give yourself the motion challenge sequence at least occasionally. So those would be the ducts that you would want to line up for day to day practice. If you line up those ducts for day to day practice, what else is left? Well, at least once a year do the equivalent of a one week retreat.

That's absolute minimum. When I say the equivalent, not everyone in the world can get away for seven days or 10 days to do a residential retreat. In fact, most people can't.

But there are ways of doing the equivalent. For one thing, the home practice program, which we created, which almost anyone can do as long as you speak English and you can get cheap long distance or you have internet with Skype, then you can have a retreat practice. You just have to sort of amortize it over the years, spread it out. But a four hour or eight hour program, if you did enough of several of those, many of those over a year, that sort of will serve as your retreat practice. During retreats, as you see, you build up a certain momentum. Then you go back to your daily regimen. And instead of that being a peak experience, it may go down a bit, but it becomes a stable plateau. You now grow gradually with your daily elements and then do your next retreat. And then as you look over the big picture of the years and decades of practice, what you'll see is as a general trend, the retreats take you to a new level.

The daily practice backs it up with more modest growth. And so you have this sort of stepwise growth curve. And if you look at the overall envelope of the curve, at some point it becomes evident that it is in fact exponential. When does the break point in this exponential curve come? The break point means when it goes from looking modest and linear to, oh my god, this is really taking off.

That's the point at which the derivative starts to go infinite. The break point occurs when you start to get the immediate taste of purification. As soon as you bring equanimity to an experience, you don't have to wait. You just bring the equanimity to it and you sense that

sources of unhappiness are breaking up. You can actually taste it happening.

I can't put it into words. It's the Vishuddhi rasa. I made up a word in Sanskrit. This word should exist in Sanskrit.

Vishuddhi means purification. Rasa means taste. There's a taste.

And it's impossible to put into words, but once the spiritual palate matures so that you can taste it, that's the break point. Because now you're dealing with operant conditioning, Skinnerian conditioning. It's a positive feedback loop.

It's just classic math. The taste of purification can't be put into words, but as I say, its acquisition marks the transition to a mature spiritual palate. There are tastes that kids just don't understand. Why would anyone drink coffee? Most kids can't understand spicy foods either, I think. It's like, why do adults put this in their mouth? It's bitter.

It hurts. There's not a taste called spice. You know what spice is? Spice is pure pain. It's the raw nerves. It's the actual, the same nerves that give you a pain signal are what are stimulated by capsaicin. In fact, that's a way of inducing lab pain.

But anyway, that's... Why would anybody like something that hurts in their mouth? Why would anybody like anything that's bitter? Most kids cannot understand why adults eat this kind of stuff. But the palate changes. So there's a taste that comes about when a person experiences pleasure or pain with equanimity.

And the taste is identical. It doesn't matter whether it's with physical pain, emotional pain, physical pleasure, or emotional pleasure. There's a knowing that because of the way I'm greeting this in this moment, the poison and pain from previous moments is being wiped away and every moment of the future will be marginally less suffering and more fulfilling. It's a kind of knowing of that. When that reward flavor, the taste of purification, which is just the taste of equanimity or the effect of equanimity, when that comes on, that's when the growth curve goes like this. Because now the preoccupation with feeling good is starting to go away. You've got another kind of feel good that's not the old kind of feel good. It's just its own thing.

And it's available on demand. So either you feel good intrinsically or you don't feel good and you have equanimity and you feel good. So now it just takes off.

That's when it goes like that. So if you can get these elements in place, then you'll be in good shape. The day-to-day rhythm, formal practice, practice in life, stillness, motion, micro hits, background practice, accelerators at least occasionally. You have that day-to-day. You have retreats. If you're fortunate enough to do residential retreats, great. But some intensive formal practice that's more than just a long sit. What else do you need? Well, at least occasionally touch base with someone who's competent to guide the big picture of your practice. That's a very specific job. You can have many teachers. But you need to have at least one person that knows how to guide people through the entire range of classical experiences that this practice can potentially bring about. So you touch base with that person once, twice a year to talk about the big picture of your practice.

## How to do Healthy Merging ~ Shinzen Young

If you do a healthy merging with someone, it's not just good for you, it's good for them and they won't feel invaded in any way. And that's a skill of being able to do the merging and not make it look like you're invading them somehow.

You actually have to practice that. So when you healthy merge with someone, they shouldn't feel like they're being somehow invaded. They should feel like they're being loved unconditionally and everyone wants that. Which goes to the equanimity piece. The healthy merging is a state of unconditional positive regard towards that person. So this is a question that comes up because people get to a certain depth with their practice and they start to experience this merging. I had this come up just a few days ago with someone.

And then they're noticing that people are sort of pulling away from them or something because their focus is too intent. And the Chinese have this expression, how can I translate it? Tone down the light and share the dust. It means like don't... Share? Share the dust. It means don't blow ordinary humans away by looking like you belong to the non-human realm too much. It's a skill. I know people tell me that you're supposed to share your innermost experience and students love that.

I don't know if I'd buy that, okay? Because do you really want that much information about your teachers? There is such a thing as TMI. So here I'm going to take a chance. Now I got your attention. Okay this is true, okay? Not a day goes by that sometime bopping around in the world just interacting with people I will have this impish thought.

I'm passing for one of them. They don't know. They think I'm a regular North American human. And of course most of me is. But there's a part that's not human. And it's like they don't know. They're deceived by the surface. And it's sort of fun. Like someone, I don't know, getting away with passing for something that they're not back in the days when there was racism.

It's like pulling the wool over their eyes. Anyway maybe that made no sense at all. But you have to pass as a human after you've learned to contact a little bit of what is not human. So you have to express that in a way that doesn't weird people out.

And it takes some training. So what characterizes, the reason I laughed when you said why do we merge, okay, is the real question is not why do we merge. The real question is why don't we all merge. What happened that got in the way of what was originally there at birth. That's all there was. We just were. We were everything. And then I can remember when the self arose within me as a separate. I don't have very good memory of childhood, of specific events. But boy I absolutely remember when my personhood arose. And it was at an early age. And it's like, why, something's changed. Something's changed.

I used to just be happy all the time for no reason. And now I'm worrying. And it was the arising of talk space. Before that it's like there weren't any issues.

It's like why am I not happy anymore? Why am I constantly thinking about the past and the future? I was like, I didn't know what was happening to me and I couldn't stop it. So the question is not why do we merge. It's like what happened that prevented us.

Well what happened was we accumulated enough life experience that we developed a thinking mind. Which is good, but it became a prison instantly. Which is not so good. And then later on in life we're now making the great escape. That's what this practice is.

It's the great escape from that. So anyway to characterize the healthy versus unhealthy merging. What characterizes the healthy merging is you understand the mechanism, why it

happens. You have control over it. When you do it, it doesn't weird people out. And you carry away just one, two tastes as I mentioned. After I've merged I got bigger and I got cleaner and that's it. You don't carry away usually anything specific from the merging.

Unless you decide that you want to do that. And as I say in my long career, I mean it was only a couple of years into meditation, maybe a year into practice when I started to get some of that sense of inside and outside merging. That was a long long time ago. And in this whole career I've only twice intentionally merged for a purpose.

And I told you what those two were. By the way you folks may get a chance to merge with a mathematician speaking math in front of you that you don't understand. Maybe tonight.

I'm preparing a sacred geometry powerpoint. We'll see how that goes. But anyway, so you just carry away an expanded identity and a more elastic identity for having done it.

You don't typically carry away something. So that you, it really doesn't make that much difference if you merge with a flower or a garbage can or if you merge with a sinner or a saint. People are like really afraid, I don't want to merge with a psychopath. No you won't pick up any psychopathology.

You'll just incorporate that activity. So the unhealthy merging doesn't have those characteristics. You don't understand the mechanism. You carry away something other than empowerment and purification. And in fact typically what you carry away is disempowerment.

Identification with the aggressor, borderline personality issues, that kind of stuff. So healthy separation is the, well I guess there's a psychological form of healthy separation. But then there's like making the distinctions that are useful and empowering. Meaning see, hear, feel, in, out, rest, flow, sway. Those kinds of separating the sensory elements, those are empowering distinctions. Those are useful discriminations. Empowering distinction is where a lot of people live, which is that fundamental sense that inside and outside are separated. There's a boundary of my existence that starts with my skin and it's I versus it, which then leads to us versus them. I call that unhealthy separation. So anyway that's what I have to say about that.

## How to do "AUTO-WALK" ~ Stephanie Nash

Hi, I'm Stephanie Nash and Shinzen has asked me to make a video and post it here where I share how I taught auto-walk at a retreat of his that I was co-teaching in June of 2019.

He loved how quickly and easily people seemed to get it, so for what it's worth, I offer it here. You can think of this as a sensitizing exercise to get a feel for the spontaneity of the automatic or motor movements that we engage in all day long and also to better appreciate the effortlessness and bounce. Okay, so we learn through contrast. Contrast helps us make distinction. It's much easier to notice the ease that's there in your arm if you first tense and release and then compared to the tension, the ease is quite palpable.

So in a similar way, I have set up a contrast between auto-walk and mindful walking or walking meditation to hopefully help make your experience of the spontaneity of auto-walk be more palpable for you. Okay, let's begin. Okay, so find an area that you can move around in, whether it's one little six-foot patch, whether you're outside with trees, whether you're in a room with a bunch of chairs, doesn't matter. Just find a place where you can do some kind of movement without running into anybody. And when you're ready, close your eyes and take a nice deep breath in and a big pleasurable sigh out and just let the body be relaxed and present and feel what the body feels like standing here now, if the body's balancing here on this place. And you'll feel the arms hanging at the side. You'll feel the pressure of the weight of the body on the feet as you contact the floor. And then allow your weight to move over to one foot, so you're leaning over to one side. And you'll feel the weight more heavily on that side. And then slowly shift and feel the shift of weight in the middle. It's equal pressure on both feet and then move over to the other side. And just play with shifting your weight from the left foot to the right foot, feeling that shift of weight back and forth. And you might notice different muscles engage in the legs. Notice if you're holding your breath. See if you can not hold your breath.

Let your breathing just go as you're shifting the weight and feeling all the sensory experience involved in the weight shifting from the left to the right and back to the left. And then come to the center. And slowly open your eyes a little or a lot. You can keep your gaze down.

You can keep your gaze forward. And we're going to begin a classic walking meditation, which would be feeling in the same way we just felt the shift back and forth. You're going to feel the lift of, say, if you start with your right leg, you're going to feel the muscles involved in lifting the leg. The leg's going to swing out. And then there's going to be a shift of weight forward as the weight goes from the back foot to the first foot, probably the heel first and then the toe. Feel that shift of weight. And as you get there, the back leg lifts up and it swings forward.

So continue with it. It's like slow motion walking where you're really feeling the contact of the foot on the ground. You're feeling the weight come down onto it, the shift of weight, muscles involved in lifting. So it'll be lift, swing, place, shift. So just play for a moment.

And this is a classic. There are many ways to teach walking meditation. I tend to do something a little more fluid than the one, two, three, four step.

But I want to just take us to something that's quite tangible and that you're probably familiar with. So lifting, swinging, stepping, feel that shift of weight. Just keep doing this, really tuning into that. See if you can still be breathing as you're doing it. You might notice the hands might be doing weird things as you're focusing on the feet. See if you can keep it relaxed.

And to continue with this, you could press pause now and continue exploring the walking meditation for as long as you like. But basically we're noticing the weight shift. We're noticing the sensations in the legs, the arms may or may not be moving depending on how fast you're going.

You're going to feel the contact on the floor and the rolling through the foot, usually on the heel to the toe. So just keep exploring this walking meditation. And then when you're ready, pause for a moment. And now let go of that and just walk normally. Walk normally around the room, so at a quicker tempo. So that little six foot space might not do.

You might have to go around chairs or wherever you go. And here's your assignment. As you're walking more quickly and with tempo, think a thought. Either it's a memory or a plan. So either remember what you had for breakfast or something that happened today, something that's quite fresh in your mind that you can replay and just keep thinking that memory, that thought. Or you can think about something you're planning to do. Something could be something you want in life, just something that you can, a thought you can just really keep going. So you've got to keep going with that thought, whether it's a memory in the past or a plan in the future.

And as you're walking around now, now it's not mindfully feeling it. Just walk as fast as you can. Don't run into anything and keep thinking. Don't stop the thinking. So just do that for a while.

And if you want, you can press pause here, but I'm going to wait for a few moments for that. Keep walking. Keep that thought going. Just keep thinking as you're walking and don't run into anything.

That's it. Think, walk, don't run into anything. Just keep doing that. And you may end up, and if you have a room of people, you might have to get out of the way of people. You might have to duck under something. You might have to scoot around a chair.

The more quickly you're going, the more agility you'll need. But keep the thinking. Don't stop that thinking about the memory or what you're planning. And as you keep the thinking going, thinking, walking, not running into things, thinking, walking, not running into things. And then when you're ready, drop the thinking and just notice that your body hasn't run into anything.

How did it know to not run into anything? And just notice that the body knows how to walk, knows how to balance, knows how to shift weight, and you don't have to tune into it. It's like a free ride. It's like the body knows what to do. So just kind of enjoy the free ride.

Continue walking and just notice the free ride. Arms might be moving at the side naturally. The torso knows how to shift, to turn, to balance. Your focus can be kind of even coverage, just kind of holding this whole event, this kind of global event happening that's just happening automatically and you're just getting this free ride. So your attention can be across the whole body or it could even be beyond the body. Maybe you're noticing patterns. But the main thing is to just notice the just happeningness. It knows what to do.

There's a bouncy, expressive form of movement. We tend to focus on what we need to accomplish, what we have to do, what are the results of our actions going to be. And maybe along the way, if we're mindfully trained, we're also tuning into sensory experience. But what if we notice the things that happen automatically and enjoy that light ease of them? We can do this when we walk, wash dishes, chew, drive, any movement activity, yoga, qigong, sports, playing musical instruments. Many Olympic athletes talk about letting go of the thought before they start and just letting the body do what it knows to do. So we can enjoy this conditioned motor experience that the body knows what to do. So play with the ease of that, I like to call it the free ride of auto walk or of auto anything. And tune into that light, bouncy, just happeningness of your movement that you can enjoy without effort. I

hope that's a helpful introduction to the technique of auto walk from Shinzen Young's Unified Mindfulness System.

# How to Guide Someone through the Death Process using

## Mindfulness ~ SHINZEN YOUNG

Nunca hubiera creído que fuera tan dulce el morir.

Nunca, never hubiera, would I have creído, believed, que fuera that it would turn out to be tan dulce, so sweet, el morir, to die. Have you heard that quote? Probably not. Who said it? Someone you've probably never heard of, but is worthy to be remembered. His name was Francisco Suárez, and if you were living in 16th century Catholic Europe, you would probably know his name. He was one of the most respected philosophers and intellectuals of his time in terms of scholastic philosophy. In fact, he's sometimes referred to as the last of the scholastic philosophers. That whole mode of philosophy that characterized Europe in the Middle Ages and sort of reached its epitome in the Summa Theologica of St.

Thomas Aquinas. Why Suárez is worthy to be remembered historically is two things related. Besides that quote, which we'll go into in a minute, he invented the concept of international law. He was probably the first person in Europe, and this is way back, this is the 1500s, early 1600s, the first person in Europe to state that tribal peoples, who were of course being completely enslaved and exploited to the max by Europe at that time, to state that tribal people actually had legal rights that should be honored by the Christian nations and that it was wrong to exploit and enslave them, which is pretty good for a 16th century Spaniard, considering all things. So that was what he had to say while he was dying.

Nunca hubiera creído que fuera dado ser a morir. Who would have ever thought that this was going to be such a good trip, if I were to make it into very colloquial modern English. So can this happen? Can it be a sweet thing, potentially? Yes. And I'd like to talk a little bit about that, both in terms of how we would make it that way for ourselves and in terms of how we can help it be that way for others.

There is an art moriente, an art, a technique of dying. This is, they used to have in Europe manuals on this. I've never seen those European middle ages manuals.

I don't know what's in them, but I know what's in my manual. And of course there is the famous Pardo Tujhe, the Tibetan work. Pardo, B-A-R-D-O, means in between. So there's many in between states. And one of them is, one of those many in between states is the in between, the state in between death and your next reincarnation. And that view that we have multiple lives and that there's an interval between dying and the next birth is shared by certainly the Theravada world in Buddhism and very much the Vajrayana world. And in general Mahayana, but there is a very conspicuous silence about reincarnation from the world of the Zen masters. And they don't seem to make much of this, which I find, since they're very adamant, this is in general, there are exceptions, but as a general rule. And since the Zen masters tend to be pretty adamant about what they want you to believe, I find their silence on this issue to be quite informative. So in any event, but taken as a whole, certainly the Buddhist tradition believes in reincarnation. So in Tibet there's this famous manual, Tö means to hear, Dö means to be set free. So the idea is that these would be things that you would say to people that would set them free while they're going through the dying process, beginning to enter the death bardo. It's called, usually translated, the Tibetan Book of the Dead, which was the reason they chose that title, because there was a famous work translated, I guess in the 19th century, from Egyptian that was somewhat of a similar idea. And that was known as the Egyptian Book of the Dead. So anyway, there are these books and instructions and so forth from different cultures.



But my approach is pretty simple, actually. So, a number of years ago my mother fell, which does happen for people that are in their 90s. And she broke some things and she was in the hospital and they messed up on her treatment with her electrolytes. And it caused them to think that, or it produced a situation where she was going to die. And so it's like, okay, it's the end.

Later on, the mistake was noticed and with just basically just the right salts, potassium and so forth, she didn't die. But there was a time when that issue had to be brought up. It's like, okay, are you ready to go, mom, and et cetera, et cetera. So we talked about that. And I'm thinking, how many people I have guided through the dying process over the years, lots.

And the thought that comes to my mind is, I know how to do this. It's not going to be any different for her. I'll just guide her through the way that I've done so many times before with so many people.

At least in my experience, it's always worked. And so, okay, do you want me to guide you through this process? And yes. So it was just like, okay, I know what to do.

Of course I had my emotions because it's very different when it's someone that close to you versus a stranger that someone has referred over the phone that I've never met that has asked to be helped in this regard. But still, I sort of, I know the steps. I know the procedure.

I know what to do. So, in this regard, I think of myself in the role of death coach, so to speak. As sort of ghoulish as that sounds, okay, it is, you know, it's a job.

And it can be a very satisfying job. I look upon it as being a reverse midwife. So, a midwife doesn't create life. A midwife understands how nature brings a baby from a human from the unborn into the born. And knows how to help nature along in that regard.

So, a reverse midwife understands how nature takes people from alive, already born, and takes them back into the unborn. Understands that process and helps it along. That's the conceptual framework that I use.

And of course, there's an intimate link between one's ability to guide others through this process and one's ability to go through the process yourself. But he was 95, right? That's a lot older than I am. So, it's like, oh, it's okay. It's like this is what it is. And it's more like, okay, there's this one's funeral and there's this one that's, you know, sick.

And this, like, okay, that's sort of what's dominating the scene. Now, what I find helpful for myself is two things. One is sort of philosophical. And I don't, as you know, I don't try to convince people of philosophical positions. I sort of have a philosophy about things.

It works for me. I don't make it central to what I teach people. I only teach things that I have absolute confidence are correct and practical. Philosophy, well, that's sort of has speculative things to it. So, but I do have a sort of general philosophy of things, which I inherited from Sasaki Roshi.

Now, part of that philosophy of things, I have absolute confidence is correct. The part that is used to model sensory experience in terms of expansion and contraction. Because that we can see. We can directly experience that in our senses.

So, to me, that's not speculative. But Sasaki Roshi takes the expansion-contraction thing way beyond a description of sensory experience. He builds an entire philosophical apparatus that he claims is the grand theory of everything. And that I would never foist on anyone, because that's philosophy and that's speculation. But I think he could be right. To me, there's some evidence, but I'm not rock solid sure of it.

So, I wouldn't ask any person to believe that. So, his idea is that the principles of expansion and contraction are behind everything. Behind how the real world really works, all aspects

thereof. So that, our basic problem is that we are one-sided. In general, people are one-sided. They prefer the expansive side of things and they have an aversion to the contractive side of things.

So, he says, people, everyone loves to be... Expansion means affirmation. It means the principle of life.

It's eros. Contraction is negation. It's the principle of death. It's thanatos in the Greek. Freud, towards the end of his life, said, there's nothing but thanatos and eros. There's nothing but affirmation and negation, life and death. So, Sasaki Roshi says, the problem is people like being affirmed, but they dislike being negated. And that lack of balance is what causes our suffering.

So, looking at the world that way, year after year after year, hearing his talks, I guess I start to sort of see things that way. And therefore, just philosophically speaking, it makes sense that you can't ask... that dying is as much a part of nature as living is. And the experience of being negated should be, philosophically speaking, okay.

It should be as okay as the experience of being affirmed. So, from this point of view, you can talk about life in terms of success and failure. That's one legitimate point of view. Or you can look upon success, praise and so forth as merely the space of yourself being expanded. And you can look upon blame and failure and so forth as just impersonal. It's just the space of yourself is being contracted.

So, this is a sort of conceptual and philosophical framework about things. But as I say, I sort of find helpful in making the contractive side of... the fact that it's sort of downhill, okay, and more and more I'm going to be negated physically, psychologically, mentally and so forth. It's sort of this philosophy makes that a little bit more palatable.

But that's just philosophy. In terms of practicality, from a practical point of view, what would tend to make one's own dying process, and not just... You know, it's not just death, okay, and it's even not just dying, it's the whole decline, okay. And, you know, there's the decline and then the sort of extreme part of the decline is the dying process, however long or short that is.

And then, you know, the ultimate of it is the passing out of existence itself, the actual death. So, you know, for me, if I think in terms of expansion and contraction, and that nature seems to need two sides in order to be nature, then, like I say, philosophically, I find that helpful. Why I think that Sasaki Roshi might be on to something in terms of this philosophy is because we actually do see the notion of mutually cancelling polarities, the expansion and contraction, they polarize and then they neutralize into zero, which is the gone, the source. We see the notion of mutually cancelling polarities is very widely present in the main tool that scientists use to model the natural world. The main tool that scientists use to model the natural world is something called the complex number field.

You can just think of it as numbers. And I won't go into details, it's actually in the manual, but the complex number field is built on three kinds of contrast, each of which has a zero point or a neutralization. There's one kind of contrast, which is move forward, move backwards, and that's reflected in the addition-subtraction operation. Then there's another contrast, so you can move backwards, you can move forwards, or you can not move. And if you move forwards and move equally backwards, that's the same as not moving, so they cancel out. Then there's a stretch out and pull in.

And then you can just not stretch or pull. And that is the real multiplicative group within the complex field, is that contrast of stretching versus squeezing. And then the imaginary multiplicative group, which is like a subgroup within this field, is turn clockwise, turn counterclockwise. And it took centuries, millennia, for scientists and mathematicians to realize that you needed three different flavors of mutually canceling polarities, woven

together through certain distributive laws and so forth, into a single mathematical structure called the complex number field. It took centuries and centuries to develop that, but that is now the premier tool that is used to model, quote, reality. And the fact that the main mathematics that is used to model reality is based on mutually canceling polarities gives me some basis for thinking that, well, maybe he's onto something. As I say, I know it's useful with regards to studying consciousness.

That I have no doubt about. But is this really the grand theory of everything? I don't know. But it's reflected in the math, and not just in the complex number field. There are numerous other algebraic, abstract algebraic systems. But, not all of them, but many of the most important abstract algebraic systems involve invertible elements. You do it this way, you do it the opposite way, and when you bring those two together, you don't do anything. So, because that structure is so widely prevalent in mathematics, and because mathematics is what modern science uses to model and predict, and even in some ways explain the real world, well, if what underlies math seems to sort of agree with Sasaki Roshi's grand philosophy, well, maybe he's onto something.

So, of course, when I go to him and tell him things like this, he's completely blasé, doesn't care. I went up once after one of his talks, he gave this talk where he absolutely described the set-theoretic construction of the natural numbers. I mean, he described it. That was like the most innovative thing that happened in mathematics in the 19th and 20th century, was Cantorian set theory. That's the basis of new math, okay? And Cantor's formulation of the natural numbers built on the notion of set was a revolution in mathematics.

Absolute revolution. And one day in one of his case shows, he described that. He described that. Of course, he didn't know that that's what he was describing.

He was describing consciousness. So I go up to him and I say, you know, Roshi, your talk about what zero is and what one is and the number two is, you know, etc. So he was saying zero, one, two. He was describing how each moment of consciousness contains the previous moment, okay? And he gave this very detailed thing about expansion, contraction, come apart, come together, come apart, come together. And each time they come back together, it's a larger zero, okay? But the way that he described it was virtually isomorphic to some of the set theoretic formulations. So I go up to him and I say, you know, Roshi, you just described some pretty advanced mathematics.

And he goes, ah, soka. Sugakusha wa soko made miteru no kana? Oh, is that so? So the mathematicians have seen that far, huh? That was the last time I went up to him and said, hey, Roshi, you've rediscovered science. Now, what kind of ether does he pull this out of? He doesn't know anything about math and science. But he knows consciousness. And he knows a very deep view of consciousness. So, in his view of consciousness, there's life and there's death. And there is that which is beyond life and death.

That which comes about when you completely give yourself to life and completely give yourself to death at the same time. So, being steeped in this philosophy, I find that, okay, that's somewhat helpful. So this is just half of nature, what I'm going through, and, oh, it's part of the deal.

But then, as I say, that's philosophy and that's cognitive reframing. Now let's talk practical. Practically, how do you die in a good way? And how do you guide another person to die in a good way? Well, first thing I do if I'm sort of called on a case, okay, typically I get called in, okay? Either a student is facing death, they've gotten like, okay, you know, I've got this terminal diagnosis kind of thing. Or it's an acquaintance of a student. You have a friend who is facing death and you would like me to work with him. So, the first thing is, the first issue is this awkward thing that's interesting, you know, between life and death, right? The awkward intermediate zone. There's this awkward thing of, to what extent is this person still fighting to survive? Which is desirable and admirable.

And to what extent are they saying, well, you know, okay, it's the end. And I'm pretty much allocating my resources to having euthanasia. The original meaning of euthanasia is not mercy killing.

It is literally in Greek, euthanatos, a good experience of dying. Okay? So, how do you sort of bring this up? Because you don't want to say, like, remember that Simpsons thing where Homer Simpson eats improperly prepared fugu? The puffer fish in the sushi place, right? And he's convinced he's going to die. And so they give him a book to read. And the name of the book is, So You're Gonna Die. Okay.

I think it was an audio tape. And, you know, you can't just, in the role of the death coach, I almost would like to go there and say, okay, so you're gonna die. Here's what we're gonna do. But that would really be ghoulish. And besides, there's, like, people aren't necessarily ready to say, okay, I'm gonna die now, that's where my resources are going. So the first thing I have to find out is, have they sort of crossed that threshold where, you know, basically they are thinking, this is it, and I'm not, like, we're not doing any hail Mary heroic things here to try to survive. It's like, okay, you know, their mental set is oriented towards the dying process.

Or is it still oriented towards recovery or at least something, surviving a little longer, what have you. So the way I bring it up is, instead of saying, so you're gonna die, I say, okay, sooner or later everyone's going to die. Right now, the one thing we can say for sure is that you're in a life-threatening situation. And therefore, that's going to bring up for you, in a very tangible way, the reality of whether it's now or whether it's way in the future, you know, sooner or later we have to face this. And I'm going to give you some ideas about how to face it. Okay? So that way I'm not constraining, I'm not, like, consigning them to, you know, you're already dead kind of thing. So that's sort of how I deal with that. Usually in my situation, by the time I've been called in, they're pretty much, they know they're going to die and that's what they're doing. But in those cases where that's not the case, there's a very subtle way of getting them to buy into the notion of, okay, let's consider how to die, our smoriendi. Let's consider that, even though they might not be resigned to their own imminent death at this time.

So there's sort of that. Then, that's what I do to get, so that I can get a sense of, that they're on board with the things that I'm going to guide and suggest and so forth. Then there's another thing that I learned early on, which is when people do die, they tend to get very wiped out and not be able to talk very much, and also very often they're medicated. So there comes a time when there can't be much back and forth, and you know that my whole way of working is real-time interactivity. So what do you do when that's sort of cut off? So what I do beforehand is I ask them, I say, you know, there may come a time when you really can't talk much or give me any feedback.

If that happens, is it okay if I give you guidances, even though you're not giving me feedback, if I just speak and say certain things? And they almost always say yes. But I do that because I feel that you need an informed consent in this regard, that you don't want, I don't want to feel like I'm invading someone's space, especially in the last days of their life. So if they say, yeah, it's okay, you know, towards the end, you can say some things. Then they've told me that it's okay and they know what to expect, and I don't have hesitation about doing this at that point. So then the next thing that I do is I start, I query, I'm looking for certain things.

So what is the dulce part of el morir? Okay. Well, actually, it's right on the basic mindfulness grid. As people become more worn out by the process, there can often be a natural tendency to be drawn to restful states. If you look at the body language of dying people, okay, it can be very, already sort of corpse-like. It's like the yoga corpse posture kind of thing. Because it's just, they're just too exhausted to want to move at all, even microscopically. You can see it, that the body is starting to, is wanting to relax. So I query if they can relate to the relaxation of the body. It's a way of putting a positive spin on the

exhaustion, actually. So can they or can they not relate to, okay, well, you're really exhausted, so how about just being like perfectly still and totally relaxing the body? Does that work for you? And so I query that restful state. I also query if they're either experiencing or can relate to the possibility that the mental talk may somewhat turn off. That can be caused by various causes. Of course, it may not happen, so there may be a lot of spinning there. But there is a natural tendency for the mental, for the, to sort of disengage from sound and for the mental talk to turn off.

I query. I don't say it has to be, but I ask, okay, is there any of that tendency or can you relate to that notion of here rest? And then, you know, the classic thing that is talked about in the Tibetan Book of the Dead, that people see this bright light, well, of course, that's just an example of sea rest, right? Or as you look at dying people, you see that their eyes defocus, okay, well, that's another sea rest. Or there's blackness, you know, people sometimes, like, there's this darkness coming over me, etc. That's another flavor of sea rest. So I query whether they are experiencing or can relate to the restful states.

If the answer is yes, that's where we start. And often that's about, that's all I do. Because it's simple, they find one or a combination of the restful states that they can relate to, they can do it, and the dying process seems to be pushing them that way.

And usually that's where it ends. I just keep reinforcing the notion of rest. When I had the discussion with my mother about dying, I couldn't BS her and say, hey, I know what's going to happen to a person after they're dead and you're going to go to heaven and whatever, you know. But what I could tell her with confidence is, what I said is that it's natural for the dying process to be a sequence of deeper and deeper restful experiences, like the ones that you've had when you meditate.

Because one of her favorite meditation techniques is focus on rest. So she was familiar with that. And her exact words were, that sounds wonderful. So that of course produced a lot of pleasant feeling in me. It's like, okay, I've prepared her by being her meditation teacher that she can say, that sounds wonderful, as opposed to all the other freak outs that people could have when they're facing the end.

That sounds wonderful, it's pretty good. So often that's what I do. Typically that's what it is. It's the restful states. And it's a way of thinking about dying. It's like, well, I'm just going deeper and deeper into rest. It can happen though that a couple other themes come up.

One is flow. If you look at people as they're dying, I know it sounds weird and I don't know how to put it into words, but you can actually see the subtle vibratory flow that's filling their consciousness. I know it sounds weird and I don't know how to put it into words, but you can actually see it. It's like a scintillating mist over their whole being. So you can see that, ah, that's what's happening there. It's like there's a somethingness of self and world.

It's like this Alka-Seltzer tablet that's been dropped in this water and it's just all this fizz. So I will sometimes query if they're detecting any flow states. Either in the undulatory, the vibratory, or the expansive-contractive, because when you come into this world, you come in born in between expansive-contractive flow. That's also how I guide the birth process. And when you go out of this world, you are torn apart, literally, by the forces of expansion-contraction.

Which sounds horrible, but need not be. Because if you give yourself completely to those forces, to the infinite and the infinitesimal, you allow yourself to be literally stretched and literally blown away and crushed. Crucifixion, okay? Stretched and nailed. If you don't fight those forces of life and death, then you become those forces of life and death. And you become free from the bondage of life and death.

Because you become life and death itself. So I'll sometimes query flow if it's present or not, or if they can relate to it. Now, the other thing that comes up is gone. There's the

micro-gones that you may experience in meditation. And to the extent that you have become intimate with those micro-gones, those moment-by-moment sensory gods, to the extent that you are intimate with that, to the extent that you have learned to associate safety, fulfillment, and tranquility with those gods, those sensory gods, to that extent, the gone of your existence has a very, very different meaning for you. Because it's just a big version of all those little gods.

It's just a big version of that. So the bottom line for meditators is to the extent that you have become intimate with the restful states, to that extent there's a very high probability that your dying process will be that, naturally. To the extent that you have become intimate with flow, and particularly, well, any of the flavors of flow, including the expansion-contraction flavors, there's a pretty good probability that your dying experience will be informed by that.

To the extent to which you've come to really know God as it is, to that extent you won't actually notice the difference between being alive and being dead. There's a finger-ground reversal that takes place at the beginning of your practice. You don't detect many vanishings at all. Then, as things progress, that theme often becomes prominent. They talk about the stage where you're aware of rising, passing. It's like, wells up, here subsides. Wells up, here subsides. Wells up, here subsides. Wells up, here subsides.

Rising, passing. Udaya, vyaya. Udaya means going up. Vyaya means going away. When you put them together in Pali, it becomes Udaya, vyaya.

It's a stage described in the classic manuals from Southeast Asia. What tends to lead to that experience of rising, passing, knowledge of Udaya, vyaya, jnana, dasana, I guess is the actual phrase in Pali, the knowledge of rising, falling. What tends to lead to that clear experience of rising, falling is your equanimity, your ability to completely open to each new arising, to just say yes. That ability at the very inception of a sensory event to affirm, totally affirm. The more you affirm quickly a given sensory event, the more you'll get this rising, passing thing. So it's how quick and how complete the saying of yes is to the arising of a given event that will allow you to see the pattern of yes, no.

Yes, no. The big yes allows you to see the no, the passing. But then the next stage, after Udaya, vyaya, is described as you're only aware of the passing, but actually not quite. What it actually says is, no sooner is it arising, but it's already passing.

And so that's a spatial, that is a temporal description. In my beginning is my end. East Coker, a poem by T.S.

Eliot, begins that way. In my beginning is my end. No sooner does a sensory event, a thought, an external sound, a body sensation, arise that you're already aware it's dying as it's arising. It's coming up, it's dying away. And the dying away is very significant. Now, in the classic manuals of Theravada Buddhism, which is where the mindfulness or vipassana that we do comes from, they use this temporal metaphor.

As soon as it's arising, it's already passing. What Sasaki Roshi has done is he's taken that stage of practice, but he gives it a spatial metaphor. Because every sensory event exists in three-dimensional space. It has width, depth, and height. Even mental talk has some spatiality to it.

Certainly the body, the visual, sound, right, left, and so forth. So, temporally speaking, that stage of insight, you could be described as, no sooner is it arising, it's already passing. But spatially speaking, the exact same thing could be described this way. No sooner is it expanding, but it's already contracting. So, Sasaki Roshi's discovery of expansion-contraction is merely a spatial reworking of the temporal description that exists in Theravada literature. He says, adamantly, there's no such thing as flat Zen. Zen is a ball. You must become a ball.

A ball, okay, that simultaneously expands and contracts. In other words, I'm not here observing rising and passing over here. Me and the world are arising and passing in this three-dimensional fountain that is simultaneously gushing and gathering, always.

It's a fountain of pure doing. So, that's a spatial way of talking about the same thing. That gets us away from the notion of a fixated meditator observing things.

The observer, him or herself, arises in between the spread and collapse of space. So, sometimes people say, hey, Shifzin, you've got a label for the moment of vanishing, gone. What's wrong? Why don't you have a label for the moment of arising? I do. I absolutely have a label for the moment of arising that we use when we do the expansion-contraction flow. The moment of arising at a very deep, deep level of understanding. The moment of arising is the moment when the space of that experience simultaneously comes into existence and begins going out of existence.

My label for that is both. Both expansion and contraction, they've pulled apart and they are molding the present moment. Both gone, both gone, both gone, both gone. You sum up all those boths and gons and you have a giant eternal fountain of youth that is always simultaneously spreading and collapsing and pervaded with the absolute tranquility of a trillion vanishings. To the extent that you have become that, that there's been a figure of ground reversal. That instead of thinking about that or observing that, you actually participate in that. Well, that's an eternal fountain of youth. So, to that extent, you become that and your personal death is much less of an issue.

Because by personal death you mean the death of a mind and body. But to the extent that you've re-identified with the flow of the source, that's not going to go away. So, you will never go away.

To that extent. And to the extent that there's been a figure of ground reversal and instead of observing gone, there's just gone and things come and go from it. Well, to that extent, you won't actually notice the difference between being alive and being dead. And as strange as that sounds, that means that you won't have to die. Your body and mind will have to pass away, but you won't have to die. Thank you.

## How we Evolve & Integrate (including the "Dark Night") ~

### Shinzen Young

So, yesterday I told the story of when I was at Mampuku-ji and a friend introduced me to the poet Gary Snyder and we became buddies. And then later in a presentation here in the United States at a university, someone asked him who can save the world. And he gave a typical Zen answer. He said, well, I can't tell you who that person is, but I can tell you something about that person. It's going to be someone who doesn't need to save the world. And he sort of left it at that. So what did he mean by that? Someone who doesn't need to save the world. Let me see if I can fill in some of the details because it's actually a very deep issue.

This path, contemplative-based psycho-spiritual growth, is how I think of this path. It's universal. You find it all over the planet, east-west, prehistoric, historic times. There's an underlying commonality, which if you think about it is utterly extraordinary considering the enormous variation in culture, language, race, and so forth, that is this planet, east-west, ancient-modern, prehistoric actually when I say ancient, Stone Age, our remote ancestors. So there is this very human thing, this universal human thing that I call contemplative-based psycho-spiritual growth.

It represents a radical re-engineering of our humanity. So I mean I like to present things as you know sort of in a light, humorous way. And the reason is because this is actually such a heavy-duty industrial strength process so it's nice to be light and humorous about it and not take ourselves too seriously.

But actually it is very heavy-duty. My phrase is it represents a fundamental re-engineering of who we are. And I'm going to guess that it's the next step in evolution, although obviously no one can know that. But if you look at how evolution has proceeded hitherto, it's through natural selection at a biological level.

And we are the beneficiaries of that process. Eventually that process, it took millions and millions of years, but that process produced an amazingly intelligent species on this planet, at least relative to the intelligence of the previous species. Now yes, there's other quite intelligent species, elephants, porpoises, other great apes and so forth. But when you look at our brains, there's just an amazing difference at a physical level.

So we're smart, and I think that we're smart enough to figure out that there's a couple little flaws in our engineering. The other species have to just wait for the Darwinian timescale, which is mega years, millions of years for natural selection, or certainly tens of thousands of years for natural selection to mould through expansion and contraction, life and death, mould their evolution. But apparently, and once again this is conjectural on my part, but apparently natural selection has finally produced a species smart enough to actually realise that there are flaws.

The entire European tradition, at least post-pagan Europe, the Christian tradition, is based on that paradigm, and whether or not one accepts the story, the Greek word for story being mythos, whether or not you accept the myth or the story, you cannot argue with the logic that there's something wrong. Look out at the world, something's not quite right. Now you can say, and we will say, that there is a primordial okayness also, but on the surface there's some problems, which sort of makes sense when you think about it, because very complex creatures like us can develop problems. Our own strengths become our weaknesses. We have this incredibly advanced immune system to defend us, but then what happens? It commonly creates an inflammatory response that kills us. Infection is our defences, sort of



overworking, overreacting.

Septic shock can do you in. So there's something a little off in the engineering. We are real smart, so we have real big heads, which is sort of nice, but unfortunately they're now too big to come out of the mother conveniently, so the birthing process is very, very difficult for our species.

It's an engineering flaw. Well we sort of took care of that with modern obstetrics and so forth. We benefit from bipedalism, we could walk upright, but we get a lot of lower back problems.

So it's great, but Darwin is not perfect. We have this intelligence, but unfortunately moment by moment, before the rational brain gets activated, another part of the brain called the limbic system, the amygdala, the nucleus accumbens, and other emotional structures, they get activated first. So that our rationality is neuroanatomically coloured by emotionality. So we have the situation of having this advanced primate brain, and in the centre of it is essentially the world view of a Komodo dragon. If you've ever seen any videos about Komodo dragons, their society is not a kind one.

So there's some possible problem here. In the neuroscience field there have been numerous imaging studies, watching people's brains react to politicians. And it absolutely does not matter what your politics are. When you listen to the other, your emotional brain lights up and your rational brain just shuts down.

It's expansion and contraction. So not surprising, huh, what happens, given that that's sort of how we're engineered. So good news is we're smart enough to figure this all out. I just said it. We're smart enough to figure it out, and we're smart enough to correct it.

And the way that that has been done hitherto is certainly a lot faster than Darwin, but maybe not as fast as we would like, because you probably noticed it takes years and decades typically. Although we get benefits right away, otherwise people would never come back after the first retreat. We do get benefits right away. But those of you that have hung in for the duration know that in general God saves the best for last. Usually really mind-boggling dramatic changes tend to happen after a lifetime of practice.

What? Well, happiness independent of conditions, which is pretty awesome. So that's still pretty quick. So it's a radical reengineering, and who knows what the next few centuries will bring.

Maybe as we partner with science, we'll be able to accelerate things by an order of magnitude. I've got a friend at Google. Some of you probably have read his books, Jet Meng Tan, known as Meng to his friends. That's the weird Chow Chow dialect of Chinese. He's Singaporean Chinese. I call him Chan. His last name is Chan in Mandarin, Chan-ee-ming.

It's a really cool name, actually. It comes out Jet Meng in his dialect, but Ee-ming in Mandarin. It means like one voice, one voice that shakes the world. It's from Buddhism.

It's a Buddhist term. Anyway, because he's a Google engineer, he started this Search Inside Yourself thing, some of you are probably aware of. His thing is 10x, stream entry 10x.

Stream entry is the traditional Theravada term for initial enlightenment. And 10x means he wants to engineer it so it's 10 times quicker for all humans, and we have 10 times as many of them. Now maybe we'll have a thousand or a million times as many of them, who knows.

Can't say about the future. But it is a radical re-engineering of who we are. So who are we? Well, from an engineer's point of view, we're an input-output system. We have sensory input, we have behavioral output. The sensory input reflects objective conditions.

The behavioral output impacts objective conditions. And in between we have inner and outer sensory experience. I like to classify it in terms of inner and outer seaheer feel with the inner seaheer feel creating the core sense of, or associated with the core sense of I am-ness.

So part of the re-engineering, the radical re-engineering I talked about yesterday. On the sensory side, the ability to have complete experience allows us to experience discomfort with less and less suffering, and it allows us to experience pleasure with more and more fulfillment. So that has an impact on our behavior. Sensorially behavior is driven by suffering and frustration. So suffering is physical and or emotional pain that is not experienced fully. So sensorially that causes suffering, and in terms of what we do say and think in the world, our behavior, it causes a driven-ness in the behavior. On the flip side, when pleasure fails to deliver the full potential for fulfillment, it turns into what might be described as frustration or craving.

Same thing. The experience of a craving in the moment is just an experience of an incomplete pleasure. You may have heard the notion that the impurities are pure. What the hell does that mean? Well, it actually means something very, very deep and important. It's not just an enigmatic thing that someone said in order to blow your mind or get your attention. When you have a craving for some pleasure, you could have a mental image of the pleasure, you could have some mental talk that says, hey, I want this, but you actually get a little taste, a memory of the physical pleasure and more importantly, emotional pleasures, a rosiness in the chest, a little hint of smile on the face, a frisson of excitement going up your back. Very, very subtle pleasure is present in that moment of, in the sensory experience of desire. If you are able to complete that pleasure, then it won't, that pleasure, the pleasure that is part of the sensory gestalt of the moment of desire, then that pleasure will give you complete fulfillment, the pleasure in the desire will fulfill the desire. If that doesn't happen, then the desire becomes a desire that drives sensory experience because you're not satisfied yet. That was pretty subtle and complex, but driven behavior, need, is associated with physical and or emotional discomfort that has turned into suffering and or physical and or emotional pleasure that was too subtle to complete, was so subtle that you couldn't experience it fully enough to fulfill you right then and there. And now we're driven.

So there is need. Half of the radical reengineering of this process is sensorially the reduction of suffering and the elevation of fulfillment. But that is linked behaviorally to the reengineering of driven behavior into what, for lack of any official word, I might call motivated or dynamic behavior. I think it's very important that the result of our practice not make us indifferent to conditions, conditions in our own individual life, community, nation, world. So in order for that to happen, we actually have to take measures to make sure that not only is our experience one of reduced suffering and elevated fulfillment, that our behavior moves, is reengineered, evolves from driven to dynamic. So what characterizes dynamic behavior is it is motivated by pain and fulfillment. It is not driven by suffering and frustration. As we evolve, we go from the somethingness of self and world to a kind of doingness of space.

However that requires acclimatization. Some people, as they get their emptiness or no self or nothingness, whatever you want to call it, as that becomes evident, some people, actually many people, probably most people immediately love it. And it is functional in most cases. One of my teachers used to say a couple drops of emptiness are the best medicine in the world.

It cures a gazillion diseases. However, it is not necessarily the case that for everyone, contacting emptiness or no self or nothingness is immediately a source of safety, fulfillment, love, and appropriate behavior. For some people, you have to sort of cultivate a taste for it. There's some work required to integrate it so that it is a source of fulfillment, safety, love and appropriate behavior.

For some people, they have to go through an awkward intermediate zone where they sort of are in a flatline situation. Where in some way it's sort of nice because the old gross

suffering and horrific perennial agitation is gone. But the old bounce is also gone. And the edge and the motivation and the passion for life seems to have left.

I call that the flatline stage. So some people have no difficulty at all integrating emptiness. It's just so obvious how it's liberating and functional. Some people have to sort of intentionally train themselves to develop the palate, the taste for it, to appreciate that it is liberating and functional. Some people have more of a challenge. You go through this flatline situation. Now most people don't have much of a difficulty or they require some training, but it's not a big deal. Less people have the flatline, but it does happen.

I get emails from students all the time that are in that state. Fortunately the severe end of that spectrum, so you see I'm presenting to you a spectrum of relationships to the emptiness. No, a better phrase would be a spectrum of degree of challenge to integrate emptiness so that it is liberating and motivating. So there's the real easy end, and that's a lot of people. Then there's, well, take some work, and then there's like take some more work because you're in that flatline thing.

Then there's the deep doo-doo end. Now fortunately that is, in my experience, quite rare. But as more and more people practice, even though it's a relatively small percentage, you're going to have larger numbers of people have to face that. That's going to be part of the shadow side of contemplative-based psychospiritual growth becoming the norm on this planet.

It'll be a wonderful thing that that happens, but hey, we have to be honest. We have to address this issue. Fortunately all of these sort of steps, the spectrum that I'm describing, there are effective things you can do to deal with it, even the really deep end.

So the deep end I call dark night, some other people also call it the dark night. It's similar to a known psychiatric condition called DPDR, depersonalization, derealization disorder, which happens to non-meditators. It just happens to people out of nowhere. The classic report of DPDR is I was sitting in my room and suddenly it seemed like I was no longer real and the world was flat and cartoonish and had no reality to it whatsoever. No matter what I do, I can't get out of this and it's awful. So the disease names the condition depersonalization, they've had insight into no self. Derealization, the world is no longer real, disorder and it's a bad trip. If you go to websites of people that have this condition, some of them know that no self and emptiness are major Buddhist themes.

There's one website where they say, I just don't get it, how can the Buddhists say this is the best thing that ever happened when this is the worst thing that ever happened? Yet the great majority of people that do Buddhist practice do indeed find it to be the best thing that ever happened. So what's the difference? Well I don't know exactly what's the difference. Someday we'll probably know.

But what I can say is several things. First of all, you've probably noticed that the word mindfulness is now used a lot. It's like everywhere, which is a good thing. But now that it's everywhere, it sort of can mean anything. And so the meaning of mindfulness gets watered down and sort of generalized as it becomes a common term. That's why I'm so adamant to say that what I mean by mindfulness is exactly this. Well people picked up on the term dark night.

Now it's gaining currency and it's getting watered down. And now it sort of means just any difficulty that you might encounter when you meditate. People are starting to call that the dark night. Well I prefer to have mindfulness be a technical term, not a general, hey be aware folks.

But I would prefer the dark night to mean what it meant for St. John of the Cross, which is in the Catholic tradition, which is where this comes from. Which is when they finally, when you were born into 16th century Spanish Catholicism. And you definitely had some ideas about

what God was going to be like. And it turns out that it's not quite that way. And it takes some getting used to the fact that nothing whatsoever is in fact divine. So that difficulty integrating the emptiness of God, what St. John called it the dark night of the soul. You start out and you have to struggle with your sinfulness, your selfishness, your impurities, your lack of concentration.

You struggle with that. He called that the dark night of the senses. That's the beginning of the meditative path.

But then if you're really successful, you have to deal with the consequences of that. So he called that the dark night of the soul. So he had a lot of difficulty integrating the nothingness of God. But eventually he did.

He was successful. So that, as I'd like the dark night to refer to that specific problem. Rather than just be another word for, hey folks, you know if you meditate you might have to face some gnarly shit. And you're going to go through your dark night. Well everyone goes through some gnarly shit, okay. Just living you go through some gnarly shit. Doesn't mean you're experiencing depersonalization, derealization that you can't get out of and it's a bad trip.

That's a very, very different critter. Now as I say, in my experience it's relatively rare. So don't think, oh my God I better not meditate because I'm sure that's going to happen to me. So there's a spectrum of challenge associated with integrating the emptiness. And integrating it means two things, that it's sensorially it accrues to an empowerment and behaviorally it does not lead to an indifference. So how do we make sure that this radical reengineering is successful? Well I've got a lot of talks about this. But just to give you the executive summary, we're going from one kind of passionate life to another. The former kind of passionate life was driven by passions in the sense of craving, aversion, unconsciousness and so forth.

The new passionate life arises in a different way. And if that happens automatically, fine. If it doesn't happen automatically, then that becomes part of the training to make sure that it does happen.

So let's say that some training is required. So essentially from my perspective you do the same thing for any place on that spectrum. The person that needs to do a little bit of effort to integrate the void, the person that is flatlining and needs more effort considerably, and then the rare case of the person who is essentially paralyzed by the void. What differs is not so much the qualitative part of the intervention, what differs is the quantitative part. The more difficulty integrating, the more massive the intervention that is required. So it's a matter of amount. But in terms of what you actually do, it's pretty much the same thing. So the common problematic situation is not DPDR, it's the flatline.

So it's like, how do I get the old bounce back? So let me give a bunch of tangible suggestions. This is something you can know about for your own practice, but it's also something to know about in teaching others. Because again as mindfulness becomes more prevalent and part of mainstream culture worldwide, it will be important to be clear about these things. So let's say that you've gotten some taste of emptiness, but there's some challenge in making it integrated. So first one thing you can do is selectively attend to what is pleasant in the emptiness. Now you might say, well the emptiness doesn't have any pleasure.

Well that's technically true, but it can cause pleasant impact on a human. So what could be things that you would train someone to tune into if they were in a flatline situation? Well, I'd have them look for certain things. For one thing, the emptiness may carry a tranquility with it. And you can train yourself to appreciate that tranquility. And it may actually take an intentional training to sort of tune in, oh yeah, it's sort of nice that I can touch this tranquility on demand. So that's a training, it's a development of a palate, a taste for the

void. What else? Now, of course, the tranquility might not be something they're aware of.

This is an algorithm, it's an interactive process that I do. So one thing I ask is, okay, can you sort of enjoy a tranquility associated with the void? I use emptiness, void, no self. They all mean the same thing. Some people might quibble that they're different terms, but it's essentially the same continuum at the same critter. Okay, what else? Well, the emptiness might be associated with the disappearance of a boundary between inside and outside. And that can be fulfilling and give you a sense of expanded identity and connectedness.

So I check for that, and if that's available, okay, now we're going to selectively attend to that. Instead of attending to worrying about the bleakness of the void, let's look at these factors. What else? Well, it's possible that the emptiness is associated with subtle vibratory energy that could be perceived as pleasant. So you tune into that if that's available. Okay, well, what else? Well there might be a sense of sort of effortless expansion with a simultaneous contraction. If so, you could tune into that, that may or may not be present. So what else can we do? All of the things I just mentioned I call accentuating the positive.

Then there's eliminating the negative. If the emptiness causes fear or irritability or any other sort of confusion, if there's any or a disinclination to act, those are sensory events. So everything is empty, so why should I bother doing anything at all? Why should I bother doing anything at all? Is a thought now, isn't it? It's an arising in the inner system. Probably it is not the case that everything is empty for this individual because the perception everything is empty so why do anything ain't empty.

It's a something for that person. Before the perception, I thought that the emptiness was going to be nicer than this. I think that's what John of the Cross' problem was. He was expecting the angels and the triumphalist whatever and instead he got nada, nada, nada. He had molte nada.

Or as my people say, bubkus. So it's like I thought it was going to be better than this. No, that's not a thought. That's not empty. So you empty out the reactions to the emptiness. Then there's nothing to get in the way of responding appropriately to objective circumstances. But now the response is not driven. It just happens and it's powerful and it's magic.

And it's progressively more appropriate. Just because you're functioning from emptiness doesn't mean that what you do is always appropriate. You'll still make mistakes or it makes mistakes. But then it learns from those mistakes just like the self-self learned from its mistake. The baby doesn't just get up and walk. It falls to the right, it falls to the left. But at some point it equilibrates. When the no-self doesn't perfectly speak in public or respond to each situation perfectly, it makes mistakes.

It's inappropriate. But then it learns just like the self-self learned. And if it doesn't, then you become something not very pretty.

So don't let that happen. If it doesn't learn from its mistake, if you think anything you do that just happens and there's no ego behind it and so it's okay no matter what it is, even if you're mistreating people, no, don't think it works that way. Some people think it works that way, but I strongly disagree with that philosophy of practice.

So you now are more and more arising from the situation. So your objective behavior comes out of objective reality. And if it's not right, it learns. You learn, whatever remnant of self is there learns. The no-self learns to do it right.

To the extent that that happens, now you start to become a magic person that just walks into a situation and magic things happen and it's wonderful for everyone. What else? Well, more might be required, particularly with respect to making sure that the actions are appropriate from a human point of view. You may need to intentionally build certain human

habits and how you build those positive human habits? Easy, nurture positive. You create an activity called an admirable self by training admirable human traits, rational thought, positive behavior changes of various sorts, habitual good feelings towards people and so forth.

Well, you can build those by the nurture positive techniques. So you can use things like focus in to deconstruct the resistance to act or the freak out that is a reaction to the void. So you empty out the reactions to the emptiness, you empty out the disinclinations to act and focus in deconstructing the inner see, hear, feel is a good technique for that. And then you reconstruct or strengthen certain positive habits through nurture positive. What else? Well, if the old behavior was passionate in the sense that it was driven by passions, what's going to provide the bounce for the new behavior? Well, the situation, all the things I just mentioned plus something else. You can train your motor circuits in to a quality of spontaneity.

We've talked about this and done this now in a number of retreats and we're going to be doing it at the end of this retreat if you look at the schedule. The auto, the training not of the sense circuits but of the motor circuits to enjoy their own natural just happeningness. So you can develop a taste for what children experience directly but don't think of as an object because it just happens to them. But children just like stomp in the mud because it's just fun to stomp in the mud.

It just happens. There's a just happeningness to the way a child stomps in the mud or runs here or runs there. Well, an adult, even if they're an alta cocker like me, an old foggy crapper like me, can still have that childlike bounce because the circuits are still there. It's the nature of our motor circuits to just happen. So you can train yourself to speak, move and even think from the place of bounce.

That's what literally puts the bounce back in your step and puts the lilt back in your speech. That's a huge factor in making sure that the realization of emptiness does not make you inexpressive or indifferent with regards to the world. What else? Well, some people, and this can happen as the result of contacting the emptiness, but it can actually happen.

It can be something that you contact the first time you ever meditate. In fact, for some people, the thing I'm about to describe is something they've known about their whole life. Not everyone, but some people have this sense that inside of them is a primordial black hole of dissatisfaction that can never be filled. Now I'm stating it one way, people use different language, but there's just this void in me that no matter what I try, it's just never filled. And it cannot be filled. Despite that, I keep flailing around and flailing around hoping to find something that will fill it.

So not everyone, not all humans have this perception, but I have found this to be a not uncommon perception, something along these lines. The trick here is to realize that yes, indeed, nothing will ever fill that hole. However, from another perspective, there is absolutely a way to fill that hole. And the way to fill that hole is not to try to do something to fill the hole, but not surprisingly, the trick is to have a complete experience of that hole. Because that perception that there is this hole inside of me that can never be fulfilled is a sensory event. It happens in the inner system, it comes up in life, it may be lurking all the time in the periphery or sometimes come up strongly.

Now as I say, not all human beings have this by any means, but quite a few do. The trick is to realize it is an inner sensory event. It comes up in some combination, albeit perhaps subtly and nebulously, but it's coming up in the inner system. Now when something comes up in the inner system, sometimes you can't quite pin it down in terms of image, talk and body motion, but at least you know it is in the inner system. And that gives you a general direction to pour clarity and equanimity constantly down into that hole. And guess what? Just like every other sensory event, it eventually evaporates and problem solved.

Now you've filled it, you've filled it by annihilating it. So once again, the fundamental drivenness has been worked through. So when Gary said the kind of person who can save the world is the person who doesn't need to save the world. What he was implying is a human being who has been re-engineered in a radical way. Because he was giving the Zen poetry answer, he didn't fill in the details. So notice that the details took a full hour to describe.

# How Would You Describe Enlightenment? ~ Shinzen Young

## answers

Someone asked me an interesting question in one of the onlines about no self and it sort of got me talking and thinking about the topic. There is a sometimes say that the Buddhists are their own worst PR people. I mean that the words that are used to try to sell Buddhism suffering, impermanence, emptiness, no self or even more inscrutable and off-putting no soul which is sometimes the translation. Of course there are very very good reasons why this terminology is used.

But at first it's confusing and off-putting, I mean emptiness. There's that Jewish Buddhist humor thing, I don't know if you've seen on the internet all these Jewish Buddhist jokes. There's one, I can't remember exactly, I'm paraphrasing, but what's Zen? Well you bust your tush for 40 years and what do you have to show for it at the end? Babkas. Babkas means, I mean it means beans literally, but it means like nothing, right? You've got nothing to show for it.

Well yeah but it's a very special nothing. I mean when I started I had no idea what these terms referred to. They sounded weird, they sounded interesting.

I learned how to say them in a half dozen Asian languages, but it's like I didn't know what they were talking about. Emptiness, well actually sometimes people would say like the void, so of course I had this image of this like gaping thing that's going to suck you in. Actually there's a little validity to that in the sense of the expansiveness of the formless jhanas.

That's part of it, but not at all the whole picture. So you know I would hear about the void or the emptiness and I'd try to formulate in my mind what it must be. And of course it's not just the Buddhists that talk about things like that. Essentially all the mystics all around the world have used very similar languaging and the language is counterintuitive, it's strange sounding, and yet it lines up across cultures which tends to indicate that there's something universal going on here.

Why would the cultures that had no contact, I mean obviously sometimes the cultures have contact, there's cultural diffusion, but I mean why should something written in the 6th century in Sri Lanka line up so well with something written in the 16th century in Spain and those worlds had no contact at all. But you read Teresa Avila's Interior Castle and you read the Visuddhimagga and it's not perfect but there's a lot of alignment there, surprising alignment. Teresa ends up saying in the end it took her a lifetime, she went through the jhanas, the Christian version of that, and only at the very end of her career did she come to this transformation in her understanding. You can see that she struggles to convey the difference. She's described all of these ever deeper states of recollection, tranquility, and so forth, and then you can see her struggling to try to describe something that belonged to a whole other dimension. She said it was an intellectual vision, but then she said, but I don't mean that I saw a vision of Jesus or something, something changed in my mind and my concept about things and what changed was, to use her words, the self-forgetting is so profound that it seems as though the soul no longer exists.

Well that's streametric. The salient defining feature is insight into the non-somethingness of self, the sakhaya identity, the view that there is a sakhaya, a thing, an entity called self within. Now you might think that writing in the age of the Inquisition in Spain that someone would get in trouble for saying something like that, but she didn't get into trouble at all. In fact she became the main mapmaker for Christian mystics, it's like, okay, because she gave such clear descriptions. So it's sort of interesting that these descriptions somewhat line up



and they're counterintuitive.

So emptiness and nothingness is like across all the traditions. So I, you know, in my mind I tried to imagine, and I mentioned that there was a period in my, when I and the rest of the United States was doing a lot of LSD, some of you remember that time, that's why you're here now. Anyway, so I had these ideas about what the void was supposed to be then, and I have ideas now, except the ideas now are not based on speculation, they're based on direct experience. So if I were to say what the emptiness means to me, what comes to my mind first, it's two things.

A kind of bounciness, like a basketball that like bounces. And the second thing would be a connectivity, a connector that holds the whole universe together and therefore is naturally linked to a sense of love. So that's really counterintuitive, you wouldn't think emptiness would have either this springiness or a sense of connectivity or love, it just doesn't quite compute.

But that's, those are the first things that come to my mind. So, and yet we also, I can also understand why they call it vacuity or emptiness or nothingness, etc., etc. So yeah, it's counterintuitive. I could also tell you that like an apple, the first thing that hits your teeth when you bite into an apple is not necessarily representative of the whole apple. Unless you peel it, you get the skin which is sort of hard and dry. But most of the apple is going to be juicy and sweet. And the first bite that people take into emptiness, which is a phase that might last a few hours or a few years, when your teeth are just getting beyond the skin, that's not, that experience might be sort of bleak and flat and vacuous.

But that's just getting past the skin. Once you're past that, it's this other thing, it's this springy connectivity that provides safety, fulfillment and a sense of love. So anyway, the, in the online someone asked me the different flavors of no-self. And every time I think about that, I come up with a different list over the years. So like a list came up to me and I thought it was interesting, so I thought I would share it with you.

But who knows what it will be next month or next year. That's the thing, it's, you know the story of the elephant and the blind man, but you may not know that that comes from Buddhism. It's a metaphor.

The elephant is enlightenment. People have, tend to see a certain part of it and so describe it. Well, it's like a rope or it's like a wall or it's like a pillar or it's like a sharp, like a tusk.

Or it's like a hose. Well, yeah, all of that, all of that, because there's all these different facets to it, which is, can be confusing. So it's important not to fixate one's view.

One of my teachers used to say, Kyo no satori wa ashita no machigai. Today's enlightenment is tomorrow's mistake. Meaning not error, but rather that your perspective broadens and deepens and changes as time goes on. So when people do come to an experience, either slowly and smoothly or suddenly, of emptiness, no self, what have you, one of the first pieces of advice I give them is don't fixate however compelling today's view of it may be for you. Don't fixate that it's got to be that way. And for God's sake, don't stop studying with competent teachers.

Because sometimes people go off, they think they're done when they're just beginning, actually. So we have this meeting that takes place every few years, where the so-called Western teachers, which means people teaching Buddhism full-time in the West, it doesn't have anything to do with your race, it's just where your main activity is, is it in the Americas and Europe and so forth, as opposed to the homeland of Buddhism, Asia. So there's this Western teachers meeting and it's like a professional meeting for people that do this full-time. So it's interesting and for me, I've always enjoyed it. It's a lot of fun. And it's like a professional meeting and people discuss topics and so forth. So this was a number of years ago, we broke up into interest groups. So you got to choose what interest group you're

going to be. So I chose the group that was called, quote, how do you deal with the issue of enlightenment? So I thought that sounds interesting.

I'll go to that group because I definitely have some ideas. But it was like sort of sad because it turns out it wasn't what I thought it was. The topic was not what I thought.

I thought it's like, okay, a bunch of teachers are going to get together and tell their strategies and their algorithms for leading people to stream entering. But that's not what it was about. It was about how do you avoid marginalizing students who aren't yet enlightened and still talk about enlightenment. It was like the avatar of everything that's wrong with politically correct.

Sorry if that offended someone. But it's like, well, we don't want to make people feel bad because they're not enlightened yet or whatever. So it's like, oh, well, that's not what I thought that was going to be.

So let me say what I couldn't say in that meeting. Well, in general, any approach has the potential of showing you the no self, any approach. So it's not like one is privileged over another. And in fact, it's not infrequent that no approach shows someone no self. So people that don't meditate, that don't have a practice, it just happens.

Not uncommon. So in theory, any of the techniques can do the trick or some combination thereof. But if someone were to come to me and actually specifically say, I want stream entry, what I would probably start them off on is the focus in technique.

That entails working with mental images, mental talk, and body motion. I'm saying that's what I would probably start off with, not like, oh yes, this is the silver bullet, the white knight, the magic thing that guarantees stream entry. But for me, in my algorithm, it's a good place to start because it's pretty straightforward. A beginner can do it.

And it's likely to bring some sort of insight fairly quickly. So the idea is that you go to image space and there's either images or there isn't. So you note, see or rest. Then you go to talk space, same thing.

Emotional body, same thing. Then you work with the whole system. So when you're working with the whole system, different things can happen. One of the things that can happen is that the system goes offline, typically momentarily. Mental screen is blank, head is quiet, body is emotionally neutral. Now, typically the reason that happens is that something in the outer system sort of expands in intensity.

A physical sensation or a sound. There's a lot of famous Zen stories along these lines. Someone's enlightened by hearing a pebble strike the broom or the teacher shouts. Or one of my favorites, when you take a bath in the Zen temple in Japan, you bathe in something that looks like this except it's like huge and it's a pot actually that's heated from the bottom. You take off all your clothes and there's this statue of Baradwaja, who's the patron of the bathing area. You have to bow down like this or whatever because he was an arhat and the way he got enlightenment was taking a bath.

Okay. It's like, okay, a bath can do it. So typically external sight, external sound and body and or physical body sensation sort of impinges suddenly. And if you're monitoring the inner system, instead of getting pulled into that, you notice that as that expands, the inner system goes into a state of relative rest. Now that can happen to people in an early part of their practice. That's already, that's not like enlightenment or anything, but they're already getting a sort of insight as to how this system works.

Now there's another version of that that's more dramatic. And if that happens and you have a clear experience, that might change things on a more permanent basis. Instead of the inner system going into a relative state of rest, meaning see rest, hear rest, feel rest, you're

aware your screen is blank, you're listening to quiet in your head, your body's emotionally neutral. Instead of that, you're aware that the inner space itself just vanishes.

There is no image space, there is no talk space, there is no emotional body space. That's absolute rest in the inner system. It's like the relative rest that a beginner can have only more so.

So one flavor of no self even a beginner can experience. It's like for a moment there's relative rest, maybe because there's a strong activation on the outside. The inner system gets relatively restful. Then there's a much more impactful restful state that's an absolute rest, a cessation of the space of self itself. So there's two flavors of no self right there. What else? Well does that mean that in order to experience no self the inner system has to turn off? Well not necessarily. The inner system can be quite active, but it's not tangled and not coagulated. If the inner system activates even strongly, but all the strands are clearly separate, they're not crisscrossing in an unconscious way, and if there's little or no freezing or coagulation in that system, it'll be active, but it's a kind of flow self.

And that is yet another flavor of no self. It's tricky though to truly untangle that inner system because the tangling is at many scales simultaneously. My metaphor would be if, let's say you have three kinds of strands, red, green and blue. The problem is they exist at many, many diameters. There's like, you know, there's three inch thick and one inch thick and a tenth of an inch thick and, you know, a half a centimeter and a millimeter and even sub-millimeter. There's all, for each one of the three colors there's all these different scales and now they're all intertwined.

So inside red is subtle blue and inside that is subtler green, etc., etc., and then maybe even subtler red again. So to fully untangle that scale takes a little bit of practice. But if you can sufficiently untangle it and if you can let go of the tendency to tighten around its arising and passing, oh my God, did it take me years to not resist the arising of self. Because I thought, well, the goal of this practice is quote no self, so if I'm aware of a self I'm a failure with the practice and that creates all sorts of tension.

It took a long time to get out of that bad rookie habit. So anyway, the inner system activates perhaps even strongly, perhaps even in a very negative way, but it's untangled and unblocked. That will create another flavor of self, of no self rather. It's a freedom because of intensity of clarity. It's an untangling effect. It's an anti-emergent quality. Turns out that one of the requisites for the somethingness of self is that there be a kind of tangling of things.

So the satkhyaditti depends on lack of clarity. In fact, you probably know that there's a traditional metaphor that's very famous in the Buddhist world. A monk named Nagasena learned it from a nun named Vajira and he passed it on to King Melinda, also known as King Menandros. So Melinda is what he was known as in Pali, but his Greek name was Menandros. He was a Greek king about 2,000 years ago in the western part of India, part of the remnant from Alexander's invasions of India. So he's a westerner and he had this dialogue with the Buddhist monk Nagasena and it's recorded in Pali literature.

It's fascinating. We know that this Menandros was a real person because he's recorded in Greek history also. In the western accounts, it is said that he died very peacefully. So maybe it's true that he did actually become a Buddhist meditator.

In any event, the conversation has been preserved. It's called Melinda Panha, the questions of King Melinda or Menandros. So Nagasena gives the metaphor of a chariot and he goes through all the different parts of the chariot and says, is the chariot the wheels? Is the chariot the body? Is the chariot the axle tree? Is the chariot this, that? And the king has to admit, no, none of those parts are it. And then he says, well, it's the same for self. And then he goes through the five aggregates or something like that.

I can't remember exactly. He sort of breaks selfhood into its components and tries to show the king that there is no thing inside called a self. So that's a famous metaphor. I have my own version, which I think is more to the point, neuroanatomically.

And most of you have heard this, but I'll just go over it quickly. So you have an old-fashioned CRT TV screen and monitor and there's white on the screen. It's a color monitor, but it shows white on the screen. And I say to you, there is no quality of white on this screen. And you say, are you nuts? Just look at it.

It's white. And I say, well, here's a magnifying glass. And we agree that this does nothing but make things a little bigger and resolve. Resolve means things that fall together to the naked eye are separated by the lens. You can look this up if you want to know what the resolution power is. Resolution power doesn't change what's out there. It just means that things that are tangled get untangled. And I say, okay, so now we're going to approach this white screen with this magnifying glass, which we agree does nothing but make things look larger and resolve.

In other words, untangle the sensory components. And what's going to happen as we approach? The impression white will go away and the impression red, green, blue little pixels will arise. And that's what was always there. So an emergent quality. This is a metaphor, just like Naga Singh and Sister Vajira's metaphor. This is a metaphor that probably is a little closer to the actual underlying neuroscience of the thing, although it's probably not identical, but I think it's closer than the traditional one. There's an emergent property in perception that requires a tangling of the sensory components. And as they get untangled, that emergent quality disappears. In the case of the white on the screen, the emergent quality is the impression of whiteness.

In the case of self, the emergent quality is the impression it's a thing. So as you look more and more carefully, I like to do it inner-seer field, but we could do the five skandhas, we could do the four elements, we could do the four foundations of mindfulness. There's a lot of ways that you can parse that pie. The important thing is not so much what categories you use, but the magic of the dimensional analysis. I like the inner-seer field because it satisfies Occam's razor. It's the simplest one that I know of.

You can look up the five aggregates or five skandhas on Wikipedia and see if you can imagine meditating based on the definitions you see there, because it's pretty inscrutable. But anyway, so that's why I like to use this other thing. It's simpler and it's immediately observable. You have to be a very, very advanced meditator to be able to observe the samskaras, for example.

No beginner can observe that, but any beginner can observe inner-seer field. So that's another flavor of no-self. That's the no-self that just comes from untangling the system.

Are there other flavors of no-self? Yeah. If there's enough unblocking, if there's enough decoagulation, the inner system arises as sort of like a lot of vibrating bubbles. It's like effervescent bubbles.

It's all flow. If you get that where the inner system is mostly like just shimmering on your screen and stirring in talk space and a kind of undercurrent of activity in the emotional body that may not have any particular flavor to it, but it's like the emotional circuits are sort of idling down there. If you get this fluid experience of the inner system, that's a whole other flavor of no-self. What I like to do when that happens is cover inner space because you may not be able to parse the seer field very clearly when it goes into that subtle level of vibratory flow, but what you can do is cover the whole space and then just let your awareness soak into it. The more you soak into it, the more vibrant the space becomes. Okay, well that's a whole other flavor of no-self which is sort of like the flow-self. Some of these flavors of no-self are available to beginning meditators.

Some of them not so much. The disappearance of inner space, that's a little bit on the advanced side. There's also an advanced version of the flow-self. If the system becomes pliant enough, each time there's an inner activation, that means each time there's a reaction to the outer world, each time there's memory plant fantasy, each time there's a judgment or a conviction or a confusion that arises in the inner system, each time there's an awareness that was fermented into existence by simultaneous expansion and contraction. Now, when that starts to happen, the ordinary self, all these ordinary things, including your confusions and your desires and your judgments, they're never disconnected from the Source because they arise in the folds of expansion and contraction. Sort of the two sides of God, if you want to sort of get the G word. Some people don't like that word, but I like it.

If you don't, then use something else. Expansion and contraction. So expansion and contraction, they touch each ordinary part of you. On the other hand, they touch that collapse of space thing also, because that's where they come from.

Plus and minus pull apart, expansion and contraction polarize. And then they neutralize. When they neutralize, the space of experience goes away. And when that happens with the inner space, that's absolute rest. And then that absolute rest breaks apart into the absolute flow of simultaneous expansion and contraction. So it's an extraordinary thing when your ordinary experience of self is embraced on the inside and outside by the spiritual Source.

And then there's no reason why that doesn't also extend out to the outer sphere field. So actually, when someone gets enlightened, the world gets enlightened. There's a famous Zen story to that effect. This person struggled for years and years and years as a monk to get enlightenment.

It didn't work out. And he was living on this mountain called Dozan. And finally he gave up and went to the master. And the master told him something.

I don't remember the exact story. But he said, okay, if you have to leave the temple, you know, you have to leave. But something, sorry, I forgot what the something was. But as he's going down the mountain, whatever that something was, it had planted the seed. And he suddenly had this realization after all these years of struggling and confusion. And he blurted out the words that just came out of his mouth were, the mountain has become enlightened, not I became enlightened. So what does that mean? It just means that the external see, hear, feel is born in the folds of the same polarization of the Source.

That's all. So traditionally when it happens to the inner system, we call it Muga in Japanese, means no self. When it happens to everything, inner and outer, it's called ku or emptiness. But the really just the same thing. So these are a few ways to think tangibly about no self. And at least a couple of those would be something you can understand and even a beginner can pursue with practice.

## How "Focus on Positive" is a Mindfulness Practice ~ Shinzen

### Young

What is the role of positive focus? One thing I appreciate in this formulation of the five ways that you have honed is that in the years I've been studying with you, the role of what is now called focus on positive was not emphasized a lot in retreats. And when you formulated the five ways, you made this place for what you call focus on positive that includes, we used to have some place for love and kindness, but this is this huge broad range of content that this covers. And I wanted to know, since you've been incorporating that as one of the five ways that you're doing, I wondered if you've noticed a shift or any change in your students in the teaching and if that's been lubricating the experience in any kind of way or not.

It's definitely made an improvement. The idea was, or I guess the central insight behind it, was to realize that all over the world, there is a vast range of practices that all have something in common. What they have in common is they involve intentionally creating and holding positive content in your subjective world.

Now by the subjective world, I mean mental image, internal talk, and emotional type body sensation. So there's a traditional practice that goes with mindfulness called loving kindness where you do that, but it's in a certain direction. There's certain set words typically that one uses. There are certain set emotions that may or may not accompany that in the body and so forth.

And typically people, well I don't say typically, but a lot of people don't like doing it. It's just like, I don't want to turn love on like a faucet kind of thing or it doesn't work for them, it leaves them cold. Or at that moment. Or it brings up the opposite. So it occurred to me that, well, that's a specific instance of a much broader, more general phenomenon. If you were to do cognitive behavioral therapy, they would have you intentionally create certain kinds of talk that was more rational.

And you would try to hold that and pay attention to that even though irrational talk might be coming up. Some people are into the laws of attraction, manifestation, the secret. The power of positive thinking. Now I don't comment on the validity or falseness of that belief system, but in fact that involves intentionally visualizing, working with image space and so forth. For that matter, prayer, as it's traditionally done, certainly involves talk space and in the Catholic form, if you're doing the rosary, you've got talk, you're supposed to visualize certain scenes of the stations of the cross and so forth. You've got the Pater Noster, the Ave Maria in talk space, which is a Christian mantra, and you're supposed to have certain joyful or sorrowful emotions in your body. So they're working intentionally with feel-image-talk.

Andriana practice, same deal. Athletes visualizing their perfect performance. People visualizing desirable outcomes of success.

People wishing well for other people in a general way. People visualizing their own improved behavioral changes in personal behavior. There's this vast range of things that people do.

And they all have something in common. They involve working with one, two, or all three of the subjective sensory elements, not in the sense of observe, but in the sense of actively create and hold. So it occurred to me, why not just unify that, give people the choice to do it in whatever way they want, and that way they're not limited, if they want to do a sort of gushy loving kindness, that's fine. If they want to do a sort of new age magical thinking, that's fine. If they want to do a cold rational cognitive reframing, that's fine too.

If they want to merge with an archetype, hey, that's fine too. However you want to do it, just do it. But understand that in doing that, you are actually doing a kind of mindfulness practice.

See, I put... It's brilliant to give that freedom now. Yeah, well, so that's helped. In answer to your question, it's people having that freedom to do that. Now they can get into it, whatever it may be. But from my perspective, my main interest in having people do this is as a form of mindfulness.

Now that's not traditional. Usually the loving kindness and whatever is in contrast to mindfulness. But I see it as under the category of mindfulness because of the way I choose to define mindfulness. I define mindfulness as any practice that elevates concentration, power, sensory clarity, and equanimity. And I would claim that holding certain positive content in feel-image-talk, do you have to have concentration to do it? Sure.

So it will build concentration. You have to have equanimity with all the distractions of negative that will come up because when I teach it, it's not a fight between positive and negative. It's a selective attention to positive and let the negative just run rampant if it wants. You're not trying to reject the negative and identify with the positive. You're just selectively focusing on the positive. So you're having equanimity with the negative. You're not pushing it down.

You're not locking onto it either. So the equanimity piece is there. And probably most important, you're developing sensory clarity because you're getting a familiarity with the three subjective spaces, not by observing them but by actively creating with them. So it's a kind of active learning to become intimate with your subjective experience. So from that perspective, it falls perfectly within the category of mindfulness practice. So it gives people an enormous freedom to do what's interesting and fun for them while at the same time developing the core skills that are the defining feature of mindfulness. So it's worked out very well. Thank you for your time today.

## In the Hands of the Cosmic Pizza Chef ~ Shinzen Young

So what did you say? You said that there's like this thing that it only wants one thing.

It's like monotonic. It knows nothing, it's a force, and it's a command, and it's one command only, and it's be everything. And it doesn't respect any normal distinctions that we make, either normal ones that humans make or the ones that we make when we construct the techniques.

Like, okay, we're going to distinguish visual, auditory, semantic, inner and outer, active, restful. This doesn't respect any boundaries. All it says is, you could say it a million ways, live, get big, be everything is not bad. And there is its complement, it's exactly the same, except it says exactly the opposite.

It says die, it says get small, it says be nothing. And no sooner is one present than the other is present. That's what you... You made a certain spatial metaphor of like, okay, you know, you're pushing from this side, it's pulling out from the other side.

That particular physics metaphor might not be the right metaphor, but it's the right general idea. They generate each other. A man feels more masculine in the presence of a woman and conversely, they sort of generate their own contrast, right? So you're absolutely correct. We represent complementary flavors of nutrition and we're like babies. And we want to be... Sometimes we want to be held by daddy, sometimes we want to be held by mommy, sometimes we want to be held by both, sometimes we want to just crawl off on our own.

But as long as we can know that we can have all of those on demand, then all of our needs are satisfied. So this is the adult version of perfect parenting, I guess we'd have to say. The adult is now the infant, right? Mommy and daddy are perfect parents from their perspective. Now from the baby's perspective, well, that's another story. Because most of the babies aren't even aware that they've never lost their cosmic mommy or daddy. So you get the sense that they kind of want to tear you apart.

Like a kid who doesn't understand, like, why do I need to eat? I'm crying, I'm suffering, why are you trying to feed me? It's sort of like, strange. Well, it is absolutely the case that expansion and contraction will tear you apart. It's like being in the hands of a cosmic pizza chef, just being stretched and pounded.

And in the process, the lumps get worked out. And it does feel like you're being torn apart. But then as you get used to it, it feels like the paradigm shifts from the forces of life and death are tearing me apart to I am giving myself back to what I'm giving back what I got from father. I'm giving that back to father. I'm giving back what I got from mother to mother.

So it's Donna, but it's what you originally got from them. Everything inside of you that says yes joins the cosmic yes. And everything inside of you that says no joins the cosmic no.

And that's the yes and the no that's big enough to mold this or any conceivable universe. And then you become that. You become that for a moment or a longer duration depending on practice, et cetera, et cetera. So at first you think that the forces are tearing you apart. I guess we could say there are two basic phobias, claustrophobia and agoraphobia. It's too small and it's too big for humankind to bear. But then when we get over that phobia, the paradigm shifts from father and mother are tearing me apart to I'm giving myself back to father and mother to I am participating in the activity of father and mother and have everything I could possibly need forever. And we are done.



## Info on how to study with Shinzen Young

Mindfulness Meditation Thank you, Shenzhen, very much for this time talking with us about mindfulness meditation.

And again, for more information about a whole range of programs from these home phone retreats, that would be [www.basicmindfulness.org](http://www.basicmindfulness.org) or for your retreat schedule, for the in-person retreats, it would be [www.shenzhen.org](http://www.shenzhen.org). Well, thank you, Stephanie. I really enjoyed this. Yeah, I have too. And I'm going to go touch. I'm so excited.

## Inside Shinzen's Brain: How Shinzen Experiences his Daily Life

I'm interested in what happens inside your brain in any given day. Obviously from doing this practice for as long as you've been doing it, you're functioning in a different way. And I remember you telling me of how they hooked you up one time to get your brain studied at the University of Arizona. And the technician came in to you and said, now don't start meditating yet until we turn on the equipment. And you said, as if I could stop.

And you used the analogy of saying it's as if you asked someone with a lot of muscles to just don't have muscles for a minute. It's so much a part of how you function. I'd like you to give me a taste of what it's like inside your brain in any given day as best you can. Just in terms of your processing, I know you've talked about meditating in the visual field. I would just be, if you could just give me a taste of how you process your experience and what's deliberate, applying a technique and what just happens. If I were to give the big picture of what my days are like, I would say that typically on any given day, my experience ranges from a scattered and unconscious, in a sense as though I had never meditated.

I'm choosing my words carefully. In a sense as though I had never meditated. It ranges from that to a direct contact with the spiritual source involving literally seeing through this world as I'm bopping around within it, which is also an experience of myself and the world arising from and returning to the source. So my experience ranges between something like a person that has never meditated and something like absolute oneness with absolute fulfillment. It ranges between those.

The main feature, what the impact of the 40 years of practice is, is I don't have much preference between those two states. Someone once asked a Roshi in my presence what his definition of enlightenment is. He said, 悟りと悟りでないとの区別がなくなることでしょう。Which in Japanese means, I guess you could say enlightenment is the passing away of the distinction between enlightenment and non-enlightenment. That was Mayuzumi Roshi, a very famous Roshi in Los Angeles.

He has many students all over the world, great students that are doing great work. So anyway, it ranges from completely deluded to quasi-enlightened without a preference between those. And that's what's just naturally arising, that's not with an applied effort of any...

That's correct. If there's an applied effort, then obviously it starts to valence towards that state of energy and emptiness. But the main feature in daily life is there's not a preference, which is in stark contrast to when I began my practice, and probably in stark contrast to just about where everyone begins, because when you begin, you want something. You want to think you're getting somewhere. You want certain experiences. So my early years of practice were preoccupied with comparing maps and finding every possible experience and every description, and then needing to have all of those experiences, and wanting to have this or that happen. Which is what I think a lot of people... You've got to start somewhere, so that's sort of natural. So I would say the biggest change that has taken place is that I don't have that big a preference between enlightenment and non-enlightenment.

That's sort of the big picture. Then if I'm intending to meditate in action, in life, like I'm talking to you now, okay. So if I'm going to be intentionally meditating, now I just started to intentionally meditate as we're talking.

I typically meditate in the external visual field, and I typically am meditating on the process of simultaneous expansion and contraction, causing the world in front of me to arise and then disappear. So I'm now applying a formal technique. So I'm arising and disappearing right now. You're arising and disappearing from the source, moment by moment. Therefore,

you appear to me to be the source, and therefore very effortlessly lovable. I'll take it.

But no more lovable than the flower next to you or the garbage can outside. So that would be, now if I'm doing formal practice where I'm seated and my eyes are closed, I will do any of the five ways that I teach. I use all my own techniques, just sort of depending on interest, opportunity, and necessity. Although recently I've been tending to default to the technique that I call do-nothing, the do-nothing technique.

That's what I've been using recently for my own formal practice. That's a version of focus on rest in terms of a five-way formulation that I use. When you were talking about everything dissolving into and having no preference, you could in a sense define it in light, because you said, I now have no preference for enlightenment or not enlightenment, but is enlightenment then this process of the having no preference? That's a stage. In other words, first when you start, enlightenment is a figure and the world is a ground. You and the world are the ground and you have this fantasy of enlightenment that's a figure. At some point there's a shift, a figure-ground reversal, and you and your world are the figure, and the actual experience of enlightenment is the ground.

You may go through many years and in fact decades of preferring to be in that state, but then that tends to pass away with time. If you want to know what I'm preoccupied with, I am preoccupied just like anybody. If somebody wakes up and they're preoccupied with money or their health or sex or drugs or whatever, I'm preoccupied. There's something I default to as a sort of obsession. If you understand that's somewhat in quotes, but it would be my version of being obsessed. What obsession is in my consciousness. The obsession is, can I figure out better ways to bring masses of people to what I experience? That's what I default to. It's like, how smart can I be? How creative can I be in the service of the world? Not a bad default.

## INTERACTIVE Guided Meditation? ~ Shinzen Young

So as far as I know, you have developed a form of teaching that I've never known of before, interactive guided meditation, where instead of telling someone what to do to meditate or describing it to a group while they meditate, you one-on-one interactively work with someone and talk to them while they're meditating, with them talking back to you.

Can you tell me how you came up with this? First let me say, of course, that's not the only way that I teach. I do those other things too, groups and so forth. But what I really love is the one-on-one work, which can be done face-to-face in person, but also works very well over the telephone, which is enormously convenient because people that study with me, I give them my telephone number and they can call me when they're in crisis or when they just need to tune up and so forth. So we can work over the phone also that way.

So I can do it face-to-face or I can do it over the telephone with someone. How it developed was that I had my own center in Los Angeles many years ago and we had residents and they would sit, we would sit as a group early in the morning and then they would go off and do their jobs and then we'd come back and we'd sit together in the evenings. So what I would do is during the morning sits is I would give them interviews and that's very standard. You go into a teacher and you sort of talk about your practice. But typically the interviews that are done last for 10 minutes, something like that.

You get a chance to ask some questions, we sort of touch base and so forth. So when I started I was doing those kinds of standard interviews and I don't know quite how it occurred to me but it just sort of gradually dawned on me, well wait a minute, you know, what's the metaphor for a meditation teacher? Well there's a lot of possible metaphors. The Buddha described himself as a physician. You know there's a disease called suffering and I have an intervention that is a sufficient cure for that. So I thought, well what's the metaphor for me? I'm a coach.

So what does a coach do? Well if you go to the YMCA you ask a staff member to show you how to use the equipment and then they stand by you and they make sure you're using the equipment properly and they have good form and they give you some encouragements and they answer your questions and they sort of check in with you. So I thought, well gee, that's a natural way to go about this. So I started to say, okay, do this and then I would just sit with them and do my own meditation and then so ten minutes later, okay, when you did that, what happened? And they would say, well this happened or that happened. And then I would say, okay, it means this or I think you should modify it just a little bit, it might help and so forth.

And we'd like sit for a few more minutes and we'd do that. And I started to notice it was really working. Because when you first learn how to meditate, if you're working in the mindfulness tradition, you're really wearing two hats. On one hand, you're the meditator. On the other hand, you're trying to observe yourself and that's very tricky.

It's very hard to do that until you internalize the skill. So if somebody interactively guides you, you can let go of the hat of being the meditator. You just follow their guidance and you can stay with your experience.

So as time went on, I started to develop a more and more elaborate decision tree until it became this incredibly powerful algorithm that just loops and branches until the person has a breakthrough experience and works with a high degree of reliability. So it's a combination of you not having to wear the two hats plus the sort of presence of an experienced teacher as a sort of contact high kind of impact. Plus the sharing of a lot of expert knowledge because I know the windows of opportunity that nature presents literally minute to minute.

Nature is constantly presenting people with windows to transcendence. People don't know how to recognize it. When I'm working interactively with somebody, I spot when a window is open and I point them in that direction. It just works like a charm. And that's where it's really like a designer meditation because when someone does a guided meditation, you're still handing over the wheel.

Someone else is still driving on that. But what this does is it know two guidances. I think I've been guided privately in meditation over the years with you.

I don't know how many times, dozens and dozens, and it's never been the same way twice. So I think of it kind of as a designer meditation in that moment using those opportunities. Yes, that's the general idea. The trick is not so much knowing how to answer your questions. The trick is for me to know what are the important questions.

That's what's taken all the years. To find out what are the important things to look for as a person meditates. So I know what the right questions are, the most significant ones. The questions for you to ask? The questions that I ask you as you're meditating.

That's been the challenge. And then to find optimal answers for each one of those questions. So if I ask you ten questions that are absolutely fundamental, and let's say each one has two possible answers, that means after ten questions I have found the one out of a thousand guidances that is optimal for you. If I ask you twenty questions, which could easily happen in an hour period of practice, I have found the one out of one million guidances that is optimal for you. So it's like having a tape library with a million tapes and a wizard that decides for you what is optimal for you by asking you the right questions. So yeah, you bet it works.

We're off to see the wizard. You bet it works. That's why it works. Well, that plus the other things we talked about. Very effective. <http://TheBusinessProfessor.com>. .

## Is Fixation "THE" Necessary Cause for Suffering? ~ Shinzen Young

You'll recall our conversation about necessary causes. I find this very interesting because, as I mentioned, one layer of necessary cause can have a deeper layer of necessary cause underneath it that may or may not be evident until we investigate.

So Sasaki Roshi, who as we speak is 104 years old, the oldest living Buddhist master and still has a complete functional teaching load at that age, he talks about a necessary cause for suffering also. It's clearly related to *tanha*, but it's not the same word. He doesn't use that very often. There is a word in Japanese that means *tanha*, *shujaku*.

But I've hardly ever heard him talk about *shujaku*. Instead he says, *jiko wo kotei suru koto wa yoroshiku nai*, meaning it is not a good thing to fixate the self. He talks about fixation as a necessary cause of suffering.

All you have to do is unlearn the habit of fixation and you can pass all the koans and you will be enlightened and happy. So what I find interesting in this formulation is that he uses a related but different word, subtly but significantly different word for the necessary cause for suffering. And it doesn't have the connotation for the positive. Well it has a very different, I mean if you say craving it has a certain reverberation. If you say fixation, even though it's related, it has another reverberation. And the reverberation of fixation is well that's starting to sound like a global physical parameter in the information processing circuitry of the nervous system. A global physical parameter.

I mean I got it. Examples of global physical parameters in nature would be viscosity in a hydrodynamic system or resistance or impedance in an electrical system. Didn't the Buddha talk about a potter's wheel having friction? I seem to vaguely remember a metaphor like that but I don't remember the specific.

It's like the potter's wheel if it has friction versus when it moves smoothly. We're going to have to look that up. That sounds extremely interesting if you would find that for me. That might be, wow, we should definitely look that up. That's a homework assignment.

There we go. And actually friction in a mechanical system. So if something analogous to electrical resistance or hydrodynamic viscosity or friction and so forth, if something analogous to that is also a necessary cause for suffering, then that sort of makes us think, well, that's starting to sound more like talking about the brain and the nervous system. Whereas craving is somewhat, I mean, sure, we know there are centers, etc., etc.

Right, and we're connected to a sense of self that's craving versus fixation that something's happening in the system. That's sort of like something that either happens, in nature things freeze, they melt. So what is particularly interesting is if we think about a parameter like what's called the Reynolds number. Now this is a characteristic of flow systems. There's a way of computing a parameter which characterizes the flow regimen, flow regime. So I won't go into the details obviously, but if you have a flow field and its Reynolds number exceeds a certain value then it goes turbulent.

But if it isn't at that level, it's smooth and laminar. So if suffering were analogous to turbulence in the flow of the senses, I'm not saying it is, but let's say it were, then we could model. And if non-turbulence, or if the turbulence was dependent on some sort of parameter that we could identify with the physical functioning of the nervous system. For example, there's something called the attentional blink, which I won't go into the details, but it basically measures how much fixation there is in your moment by moment concentration. And that can be measured now with science.

By the movement of the eye you mean? No, I mean it's a blink metaphorically, not physically. That's why I say I'm not going to go into details. There's a lot to say about it.

You can look it up on the internet. But essentially it's something that can be measured now with reaction times. And it's physical, it's not subjective.

It can be objectively measured and it's thought to correlate with the degree to which one is inappropriately holding on to things. Really? Yes. Wow. And therefore... But there's a judgment there, appropriate and inappropriate.

Well, no there's not, and that's why I'm not going to go into the whole... Got it, got it. Basically, well I guess I have to now.

I'm sorry. Let's say that you're given a sequence of sensory events, and your job is to track the sensory events. If you inappropriately hold on to a previous event, you're going to blink or miss the arising of the next event. Oh yeah. So what they found is in meditators, there's less of that. Oh, okay. Seeming to indicate... And it's more presence? Well, it's related to sensory clarity, but it's also related to the equanimity of not inappropriately holding.

So we're already beginning to get some... And this is completely objective. It doesn't require any self-report, because it's either sought or you didn't. I mean, that's a self-report, but it's not really because they present it and you either click or you don't.

It's not like, well yeah, I remembered that, I'm going to tell you. So it's very objective in what it's measuring. Now I'm not saying that that correlates to what Sasaki Roshi calls fixation, but it's already beginning to be a glow... It doesn't matter what you're attending to, this phenomenon could be in any of the senses. It's already beginning to look at possibly another necessary cause for suffering.

If something like the attentional blink is related to what Sasaki Roshi calls fixation, and then you can untrain that, or maybe cause an intervention that prevents it of some sort. I don't know what, but let's say it's possible to do that. Now we're talking about eliminating other kinds of necessary causes for suffering. Or let's just say that we take the early Buddhist one, tanha. So when you have tanha, all you've got to do to experience nirvana is get rid of tanha. In other words, all you've got to do is knock that card and the house of cards that is the suffering falls. Let's say that what the Buddha called tanha is actually on the second tier of that house of cards. Let's say that at a deeper tier, there's something that has to happen physiologically in your nervous system for tanha to arise.

Hypothetically, that is not unreasonable. That means any and all tanha, not just craving for cocaine or shopping, but any and all. Let's say that there is a necessary cause behind the necessary cause. And the necessary cause that is behind a necessary cause is completely neurophysiological in nature. Then there could be interventions that directly address that neurophysiological.

So you knock out the physiological necessary condition for tanha, therefore you knock out tanha, therefore you knock out what blocks perfection. So theoretically, or potentially, any piece of research into craving, if it were done very deeply, might unlock a key physiological mechanism. What I find interesting is that you can't get much funding for research on enlightenment, but you can get funding for research on drug addiction. But if research on drug addiction were to go very, very deep and very, very broad, it's possible that the necessary cause for tanha could be found and eliminated.

Which would mean, if we take the Buddhist model, that there would be a physiological, and don't ask me what kind, because I don't know. If I did know, I'd get the Nobel Prize. I have no idea. Is it some super kind of biofeedback? Is it fMRI biofeedback? Is it TMS stimulation? Is it what they call DREADS, which sounds bad, but they're like these...

Sounds like a hair stand. No, it's designer drugs for designer receptors. It's like the cutting edge of the cutting edge of neuroscience. Anyway, who knows what, but if there were a way to knock out the necessary cause for the necessary cause, and it was purely physiological, then nirvana would actually simply happen. Now, what I find the delicious notion is that you can get funding for craving research, and you can get funding for deep and broad craving research, and you can get funding from Republicans, gladly, for deep and broad craving research.

Therefore, it could come to pass that Republicans become responsible for the entire world of becoming Buddhist. There we go. That was good. That was good.



## Journey to True Spirituality ~ SHINZEN YOUNG

So I just had a session with Diane.

If I'm incoherent, you can blame her. Because I may be a little too much into my body, so we'll see how much of the upper chakras are functioning at this point. Okay, so we've been talking about the possibility of mindfulness revolution. And I've made a few points, let's just review.

We have some guests tonight coming in in many arrests, so to speak. So I like to think about mindfulness from what might be described as a unified point of view, a very widely encompassing point of view. I think it is possible to have, through careful analysis of the dimensions involved, it's possible to understand certain underlying commonalities, not just for the Southeast Asian Buddhist practice, which is where current mindfulness historically came from, but more broadly all of Buddhist practice, and more broadly still all of contemplative practice all around the world. Any contemplative practice, East or West, could be nicely analyzed in terms of the degree to which, the way in which, three core skills are talked about, cultivated, and applied.

So the three core skills are concentration, sensory clarity, and equanimity. You can think about concentration as the ability to focus on what you deem relevant at a given time. What's important about that way of describing concentration is not so much what I said, but what I didn't say. I did not imply that concentration is necessarily limiting the spatial scope of your focus. I did not imply that concentration necessarily was holding just one thing for a long duration.

Concentration could be expansive, it can cover a large domain. Yes, it could be spatially contractive also, and those are actually sub-dimensions of the concentration skill, how broad or narrow you focus. Concentration could be momentary, you can make break, make break, make break, make break, taste momentary high concentration on a variety of objects. But you can also have sort of what people often think about when they hear the word concentration, which is holding just one thing in attention for an arbitrary duration of time.

It's like you can hold the sensation at the tip of your nostril for four hours without any wavering whatsoever. Now that ability to hold just one thing for an extended duration of time, that certainly is a sub-dimension of the concentration skill. However, the ability to make break, make break, make break, and have what is called *khanika samadhi* or momentary high concentration, that's also very important, especially if you want to maintain mindfulness, a deep state of mindfulness while you're engaging in daily life, you're driving a car, you're having a conversation.

Eventually we want you to experience being very, very deep while you're moving around and to get the MMM, maximum meditation mileage, out of each moment of daily life to monasticize your life as we were talking about in the group process. For that, understanding that the dimension of concentration skill, which is momentary high concentration but consciously tasted, as I say it's technically called *khanika samadhi* in the Pali language. So speaking of concentration as the ability to attend to what you deem relevant, not saying it has to be this thing or that thing, it has to be your breath or your body, not limiting it by its range and not limiting by saying, well, it has to be something small, it could be something large. Not limiting the concept of concentration to, well, it has to be a long duration on just one thing.

It could be momentary on a variety of sensory targets as they present themselves. So as I say, the way I like to talk about concentration, what's important is not just what I say, but

what I don't say, because there is a tendency to assume that concentration means hold a small thing for a long period of time. And yes, indeed, that represents two dimensions of the skill, but there are other facets to it. Concentration is to focus on what you deem relevant. Sometimes you'll hear people say, well, I don't want to learn to concentrate because I need to let my attention freely float in order to be creative and make associations. Well, if that's what's relevant to the moment, then your ability to do that will be enhanced by concentration.

Concentration will not get in the way of that intuitive flux. In fact, it will enhance it. You'll focus just on the place in consciousness that makes those connections for you because that's what's relevant to that moment. So concentration power, sensory clarity has the second aspect. It has two sub-dimensions, basically.

You know, I've talked about it in the group process. Resolution, the ability to upgrade the discrimination or bandwidth within the sensory circuits themselves. That's the resolution. And then detection. Subtle is significant. The ability to detect subtle sensory events that are normally subliminal is hugely important on this path.

So concentration power, resolution, and detection skills, particularly the ability to detect the very instant when a new sensory event arises and the very instant when an old sensory event passes. Because where things come from and where they go to are the same place. And we've talked a little bit about the primordial great perfection. Well, that's what proceeds and follows each ordinary inner and outer sensory experience. So the ability to detect what happens at the very instant of the arising of any sensory experience and the ability to detect what happens as it's passing is the ability to briefly be vectorially directed towards something that is beyond sensory experience.

Something that is beyond the embedding of time and space. Okay, so sensory clarity. Equanimity. Originally, equanimity as a term from the Latin, *equa anima*, literally means a balanced state. And originally it meant sort of being unmoved and unexpressive. But that's not at all what it means as a technical term to describe the dimensions of mindful awareness, not at all. It's balanced in a different sense, balanced in the sense of not pushing on experience that's trying to arise, so not suppressing the arisings, and not inappropriately holding sensory experience that's about to pass. So it's basically training the sensory circuits into a, training away their subtle tendencies to interfere with themselves.

It's analogous to reducing friction in a mechanical system. That's at least the way I think about it. So we cultivate these, so I said that I like to think of mindfulness, so the modern mindful movement in my own mind, the phrase that I like to use is that it's contemplative-based psycho-spiritual growth working in concert with science.

So a two-way street. Science will help us understand it in a way that we could never have understood it before, even the great masters of the past didn't know even basic neuroscience. So they could only give a first-person report, and they did so brilliantly, but with the current ways to objectively think about the biophysical basis of our experience and so forth, that's going to give us now an incredible advantage to innovate, to understand at deeper levels what's involved in these psychologically and spiritually significant growth that humans go through when they do this practice. So working in concert, meaning we look to science to improve and deepen our understanding of what's going on, but also the mindfulness practice will improve the scientists as humans and as professionals, and so you get a positive feedback loop going that could be very impactful in the next century or so.

I'm a big picture guy, so I look to the Zeitgeist, the spirit of the times. Toynbee, who is a very famous historian, made an extraordinary statement. He said that when all is said and done, it is possible, he didn't say this would happen, but he said it is possible that big picture-wise, in retrospect, three or four centuries from now, the single most important event of the 20th century will be the discovery on the part of the West of Buddhism.

That is a direct quote from Toynbee. So not that I think the Western world is going to adopt the Buddhist religion, but there are certain discoveries that the Buddha made that I think will absolutely pass the test of time and turn out to be very important for the whole human race. So that's sort of the basic paradigm that I presented to you. And then I said, so okay, that's the modern mindfulness movement, but how about mindfulness itself? How do we think about that? So I think about it as the systematic cultivation and broad application of those core skills.

Mental awareness being defined as concentration power, sensory clarity, and equanimity working together. So broad application, reducing suffering, elevate fulfillment, understanding oneself at all levels, increasing skillful actions, and ultimately, the ultimate application is in discovering a spirit where you want to serve from love, that in Buddhism we call the bodhicitta. So we talked yesterday about the dimension of application, which is understanding yourself at all levels. And just to make things sort of give some organization to things, I said we might consider four aspects of that. So one aspect would be more surface, which is to understand your own personality.

How do these skills relate to understanding your own personality? Now, as you're sitting and practicing, you've all noticed this, sometimes insights will arise spontaneously that are personal insights. You sort of understand yourself. And that's nice. And that's the result of observing yourself in a mindful state. However, there may be aspects of understanding your own personality that don't just percolate up spontaneously in your practice. You may have to go to a professional, a counselor, a psychologist, a psychiatrist, to address certain aspects of personality if they don't get taken care of automatically by the practice. And the way you'll know that the practice hasn't taken care of it is you've been practicing for 20 or 30 years and people tell you you're still an asshole. So clearly something's, you know, you know through feedback, okay? You know through, you know, things not working out. It's like, well, I've learned to transcend and it doesn't bother me that, you know, stuff is not working out because of my behavior. But actually it should sort of bother you. And if the practice can't address it, then, well, there are specialists who work at the personal level.

That's what they're trained to do. So the practice may address understanding yourself at the personal level. Maybe it's all you need or maybe you need something else. So then there's what might be called the depths or the subconscious. So certain forms of therapy claim to address that. In fact, your classical therapies, they don't call it depth psychology for nothing, Freudian, Jungian, and so forth, claim that they get down to that level, whereas other forms of therapy might not. I'm not going to get involved in whose claims are valid, but it's just something to know about, okay? There are the depths. Part of the depths are personal, but some of them, Jungians would claim, that there's a collective unconscious, that there's things deep down there that are sort of universal. So you may come in direct contact with those depths as the result of mindfulness practice.

You will definitely come indirectly in contact with them. But once again, there are practices that are not strictly part of mindfulness that are designed to sort of touch those levels. First of all, depth psychology. But secondly, shamanism, our ancient ancestors all over the world in the tribal forms of culture would contact the spirit world. One nice way to get in contact with that, if you're interested, is to do, say, Native American ceremonies and things like that.

Now there's more to the Native American path than that, because of the nature, in order to find the spirit world, typically you do shamanic ordeals. You expose yourself to hot here, like sweat lodge or sun dance. In Japan, you expose yourself to cold. You have to chant mantras squatting under a waterfall in winter for hours on end. So all around the world, shamanism entails physical sacrifices.

And those sacrifices are done within a ritual context, which of course encourages a concentrated state and encourages a state of equanimity. So although they may not systematically deconstruct their personhood, just doing those ceremonies in order to contact the spirit world would tend to have the effect of taking people into the deepest

level, which is the source, which is that formless doing that I talked about a few minutes ago. What precedes each sensory and motor arising and what follows each sensory and motor arising is something beyond form. And so there's the world of spirits, which is the subconscious, and then there is the great spirit or the dharmakaya, we would call it in Buddhism, the formless absolute rest and absolute activity that is at the source of each moment of perception and expression for us. So the result of attempts to contact the spirit world through what was apparently natural to all of our ancestors all over the world, which is you fast, you expose yourself to heat, expose yourself to cold, you go without water, you allow yourself to be pierced or scarified or other such things that forces you into the spirit realm, that's true, but it also forces you into a state of high concentration and equanimity, which would then likely lead you to a no self or an experience of touching something that is beyond the spirits, which could be called the great spirit. But as I say in Buddhism, we call it the dharmakaya, means the body of the absolute. And then the realm of spirits is called the sambhogakaya, which is the realm of glorious forms.

And then the surface is called the nirmanakaya, the conventional experience. So Native American specifically and shamanic broadly can make a nice complement to the mindfulness practice because it can take you to the experience of the very deepest level that we'll talk about a little more in a minute. But it also, if you're interested in contacting the quote spirit world, the archetypes, the realm of archetypes, well, that's another specialist that can supplement the mindfulness practice. So okay, understand the surface individual personality, either through the practice, just intrinsically, or maybe go to a specialist. Understand the subconscious, either just through the practice or maybe go to a specialist. Another aspect is what I started to talk about yesterday, which is to understand yourself as a sensory system.

So the way that I like to do that, it can be done in various ways, but my favorite way is to work with mental image, mental talk, and body emotion. The reason I like to work with those three sensory elements is that they, as far as I can tell from introspection, they form a natural system. And I believe that we'll be able to use neuroscience to ferret out those connections. In fact, that's sort of the main goal of my projects at Harvard Medical School, are to tease out that inner system and see if we can find the neural correlates of it as a system. So in any event, the mental image, mental talk, and body emotion, see in, hear in, inner seeing, inner hearing, and the innermost part of our body experience, which is the emotional body, the limbic system.

They work together. There's four basic things that happen. They all involve the word action. So first of all, there is interaction. Mental image can trigger mental talk. Mental talk can trigger mental image. Mental image can trigger body emotion. Body emotion can build until it turns into an image. Or body emotion can trigger mental talk. Or the whole thing can activate simultaneously, and they're all sort of triggering each other. So you can actually watch how the flow of interaction occurs within that system. And you can unblock that flow. So that's the interactivity of those elements.

And then there's the reactivity of those elements. External sights, external sounds, physical touches arise, and then the inner system reacts to those sometimes. And when you have an arising of touch, sight, sound, and an arising of image, talk, and body emotion at the same time, that creates the sense of the world over here and me over here as perceiver. So what would happen if there was just touch, sight, sound, and no inner reactivity at all? Well, you can actually see what would happen by observing the system. You observe the system, and sometimes it doesn't react.

It simply is inactive. And there's no sense of observer, no sense of an eye that's hearing or seeing. There's just seeing, just hearing.

And you are that. And the barrier between inside and outside disappears. Which makes it rather easy, rather natural to have that sense of wanting to serve from love. Because it seems like not just every person, but every thing that you look at, you inhabit.

So you are it. So sometimes that system reacts, and sometimes that system is inactive. The other thing that that inner system does is it goes proactive.

That's my own private language. Proactive means it disengages from the touch, sight, sound world, and it goes off and begins to spin memory, plan, fantasy. In neuroscience that's called the default network.

It has a distinctive signature. So it's off and it's problem solving, or it's worrying, or it's fantasizing out of fear, or fantasizing out of desire to entertain, etc., etc. It's like a home entertainment system.

It just goes off on its own. So you can monitor, you can understand yourself as a sensory system by observing this. So why is that useful? Well first of all, it can hugely reduce suffering without necessarily changing the content of your sensory experience. Because when those elements tangle in unconsciousness and coagulate due to lack of equanimity, that vastly increases the suffering associated with unpleasant content. And that vastly reduces the fulfillment that is potentially there when it's a pleasant content. So just by bringing untangling, which is your clarity piece, and unblocking, which is your equanimity piece, by bringing those qualities to that inner system, you achieve two of the dimensions of happiness that I talk about, reduction of suffering, elevation of fulfillment.

But it's much more than that. Working with that system is related to understanding yourself, because you see, oh yeah, this is how it actually arises, this I am-ness. It's also related to improving behavior, because behaviors are preceded by will. If I have an anger issue, or if I have a substance abuse issue, or a procrastination issue, that experience of anger, or the will to abuse a substance, or a will that says I don't want to do such and such even though I know I should, that arises within that inner system. And so your ability to have equanimity with that will break the identification with the negative urges.

And that is not all that's involved in behavior change, but that certainly is an important component. If you can stay, if you're in recovery and you're jonesing for whatever it is, a cigarette or a drink or whatever, well, that's going to come up in that system. And if you can track it, unblock it, not suppress the experience of the desire, but also not lock on to it, if you can stay with it and just watch it expand and contract, expand and contract, for however long it takes, well, it will break up. The urge will break up, and that will help you make the behavior change. Gives you a very systematic way to go about that aspect of behavior change. Now in the morning group process, we talked about the fact that there's more to behavior change than just deconstructing undesirable desires, but that is part of it. So it turns out that working with this inner system is germane to certain aspects of objective positive behavior change. And it's also related to the love and service piece because once you see where that system arises from, you realize that everyone arises from that same place. So that's another way that you're always looking at yourself, basically. So untangling those strands is important in reducing subjective suffering, but it's also important in gaining insight.

So this is where we left off in the talk yesterday. Buddhism would say that if you carefully observe the components that create the impression I am-ness, you'll see that there are only those components and there actually is no thing inside you called a self. Now first of all that's counterintuitive because it seems to just about everyone that there is a thing inside me called a self. So why are you trying to tell me there isn't? And the other thing is even if it's true, who wants it? What's the payoff for seeing that there's no thing inside you called a self? Well let me suggest to you that the experience that in Buddhism is described as seeing that there's no thing inside you called a self is one facet on the jewel of enlightenment.

The jewel of enlightenment has a lot of sides to it. That's an important side and anyone that has had these experiences will appreciate why someone would like get all excited about pointing out to you that there is no thing inside you called a self. However that is just one facet of the experience and there are other ways that that experience can be described. For

example it's an experience of a connection to all things. It's an experience of the boundary between inside and outside going away or more accurately an experience that lets you realize that the boundary was never there to begin with. So it's another way to put it, you could say no self or you could say it allows you to have an elastic self, an elastic identity that it can expand and contract. It can be the normal size which is the normal you or it can reach out and encompass the larger world that you normally don't think of as you. It can reach out and sort of encompass a person that's in front of you or the flower that's in front of you so your identity gets about this big, it can shrink down and be about this big but it can get a lot bigger. It's elastic. It can reach out to the ends of the imagined universe so any world systems that you would imagine you embrace them. But it can also shrink down.

It can shrink down to inhabit the center of every atom. I'm speaking metaphorically here. So it has been said that poets can see in the dark. I think it was Lorca that said that. So the South American writer, I could be wrong but I think he said poets can see in the dark, he's the one that said it.

Recent poet is Rainer Maria Rilke, R-I-L-K-E, one of the most amazing poets of all time. I don't know what kind of ether he is poetry from. He lived like a hundred years ago, right? Where did he pull that from to be able to say the things he says? It's inexplicable. Specifically what he had to say a hundred years ago when Europe was just starting to discover Buddhism. Just starting, knowledge of Buddhism was rudimentary in Europe in his time. He absolutely nailed the essence of the Buddha's enlightenment as it would be interpreted in the Japanese Zen tradition. Without as far as I know any direct contact with the Japanese Zen tradition and with rather little contact with anything about Buddhism. How did he do it? I don't know.

But I have a translation of his poem that I made myself from German on my website, Buddha in der Gloria, the Buddha in Glory. Mitte, alle mitten, Kern, der Kerne, Mandel, die sich einschließt und versüßt. Dieses alles, bis an alle Sterne, ist dein Fruchtfleisch.

Sei begrüßt. Center of all centers, core of cores, almond that enclosed itself to sweeten. All of this to the furthest stars is your fruit flesh.

Hear my greeting. He is congratulating the Buddha on the moment of his enlightenment, the morning after he did Buddha did yaza, an all night set, was enlightened in the morning when he saw the morning star Venus. How did he get it? How did he know about expansion and contraction? And how to link that to the Buddha? God, can I remember the rest of it? Die du fühlst, wie nicht, mehr an der hängt, und ähnlichen ist deiner Schale, und dort steht der starke Saft und Tränen. Und von außen hilft ihm ein Gestalter, denn ganz oben werden deine Sonnen voll und glühend umgedreht.

Doch in dir ist schon begonnen, was die Sonnen übersteht. I can't believe I remember that. See you feel nothing more upon you clinging. Your shell is opened wide without a bound. The ripe sap endlessly streaming within you, the ripened sap, dort steht der safte und tränen. Und von außen, and from outside you were helped by a star. That's the seeing of the Venus, the morning star, und von außen hilft ihm ein Gestalter, denn ganz oben werden deine Sonnen. When all around you orbited your stars, voll und glühend umgedreht, all around you orbited the sun, doch in dir ist schon begonnen, was die Sonnen übersteht. But that which will outlive the stars in you has now begun. That's the poem that Roca wrote to describe the Buddha's enlightenment, with almost no knowledge of Buddhism.

I repeat, what ether did he access to pull that out of? So center of all center, core of cores, all of this to the farthest stars. It's an elastic identity. You could also call it a no-self. So how does that come about? Well, early Buddhism would say when you untangle the strands, then the somethingness of self is seen as an illusion. And where we left off in the talk last night was I gave the traditional metaphor for that, the chariot metaphor from this great scripture called the questions of King Menandros, King Belinda, but King Menandros, he was Greek, a Westerner, talking to a arhat way, way, way back. And it's the dialogue is

recorded. So the arhat Nagasena, quoting a Buddhist nun named Vajira, said, well, it's when you dissect a chariot, there's just the parts.

There's no thing called a chariot. So when you dissect I amness, there's just rupa, vedana, sanshya, samskara, vijnana. There's just matter, feeling, thought, subliminal habit forces, and consciousness. And no self. There's just those elements, and there's no self. In another place in Buddhist literature, it's not quite the whole picture of self, but it's self in terms of identifying with the body, saying I am body. There's this extraordinary passage where the Buddha says, just as a skillful butcher would carve up a steer, and at some point the perception steer goes away, and the perception meat arises. So in the same way, the skillful meditator deconstructs the body into earth, water, air, and fire, four elements, and the perception I am a body disappears, and the perception there are just these elements arises. So we see in early Buddhism that the notion of untangling strands in order to eliminate an emergent property was not just applied to the five aggregates.

It was also applied to the perception of the physicality of the body, and the deconstructive strands were the primitive chemistry of that time. But it sort of works, and it actually does work. You can do it. Maybe just for the fun of it, one of these days I'll give a guide. I've actually done this with people. I've done the old-fashioned four-element deconstruction of somethingness of your body.

You can totally do it. Even though we know that as far as physics goes, that's a pretty primitive view of physics, but it still works. What you do is, because it's based on experience, they state it as though it's based on objective science, but it's based on sensory experience. So you tune into your body, and you find all the bones and the hard parts. Well, it's the earth element, right? So you tune into those and get a really good sense of that. And then you get a sense of anything that's sort of airy, like your breath or other flatulence or things like that. And then you get the circulation of the watery parts, and then you can feel warmth in different parts. And you just tune into the putative characteristics of the four elements, and you sort of get those sensory strands all separated out. And sure enough, you start to experience like, well, there's just the four elements.

There's not a thing called a body here. So the method of divide and conquer is not limited to the five aggregates. And in fact, I vastly prefer the three inner elements. Occam's razor, okay? If three will do the trick, why not have three instead of four or five, et cetera, et cetera? So I pointed out that untangling mental image, mental talk, and body emotion is, my friends at Google would say it's a non-trivial issue, okay? I love this jargon. Instead of saying significant or hard, they say non-trivial.

So this is non-trivial because each of these systems is scaled. If you look into image space, there's the surface images, but those trigger subtle association images. And each of those subtle associations triggers a whole bunch of subtler associations. The bulk of all of this is below the threshold of ordinary awareness, but with your detection skills and your concentration skills, you can actually detect it. Not in terms of the content, the content is too fugacious and parallel.

Fugacious means it just passes too quickly and it's massively parallel. But you can detect the aggregate, the state, like the state variable. You can sort of take the temperature, you can be aware of average kinetic energy as it changes. I'm making a metaphor here, okay, but it's sort of analogous to taking pressure or temperature. You can see the overall waveform of the subconscious mind in real time.

Underneath surface mental talk is subtler talk, underneath that is subtler talk. Same deal, but you can watch the sort of changing contour of the system. As with the body motion. So, untangling is not just untangling the surface strands, it's untangling all the different strands until all the levels of visual process, inner visual processing are all sort of nicely over here and all the levels of auditory thinking are over here, the emotional body is over here. At all levels, they're completely separated out.

What happens at that point is that the emergent property of somethingness disappears. So as I say, the traditional metaphor is the chariot thing. Where we left off last night is I said I find that metaphor unconvincing. I know it refers to an experience that is absolutely true and very important, but to explain it in terms of sort of taking apart a chariot doesn't seem quite convincing. So let me give you something that I think is closer to what's going on, a closer metaphor. Now, you've got to hear loud and clear, this is just a metaphor. I'm not saying this is the mechanism, but I think it's closer to the mechanism. We don't know the mechanism yet scientifically. Be very interesting when we do though. So here's something that's a little closer.

Most of you have heard me say this a million times, but I'll say it again. So you have an old-fashioned TV set with a CRT, cathode ray tube, not the flat screen kind, but the old-fashioned kind. There's like a test pattern and there's a big white area. I say there is no white on that screen and you say, are you crazy? Just look, it's mostly white. And I say, are you sure? Let's take this magnifying glass. We agree that this magnifying glass does two things. It enlarges, but that's not what's important.

It resolves. It takes things that for the naked eye fall together, but that are truly separate. And it allows you to actually see that separation. That's called the resolution power of the lens. So we know that it doesn't do anything else.

It doesn't add or subtract to what's there. And it's really not the magnification we're interested in, it's the resolution, the clarity. And now I want you to look at that white with this magnifying glass. And as you get closer and closer and closer, what's going to happen? The impression white disappears as the reality, little red, green, blue dots arises. So what happened to the white? Well it was sort of never there to begin with. But it was actually, because if you don't look carefully, it's there. But if you look very, very carefully without changing anything at all, now it's not there.

It's just red, green, and blue. Something like that occurs with inner see, hear, feel. When you're not looking carefully, it seems like there's a thing inside you called a self that you're imprisoned in these thoughts and emotions. It's not just that it's a thing, it's actually a prison that constrains your identity. But when you finally see it clearly enough, the somethingness goes away and the incarceration potential goes away. Or another way to put it is it was never there to begin with.

You just now can see that. An undesirable emergent property that's quite compelling vanishes simply through clarity. That's the core insight of early Buddhism. That's knowing yourself as a sensory system.

So it may sound rather cold and not very relevant to things. So, oh, I know myself as a sensory system. But actually it's really, really big.

Now is that to know yourself at the deepest level? Well no, I would say that there's a deeper level of knowing yourself. And we can actually extend the metaphor. Okay, red, green, and blue pixels.

Once again, do understand, just a metaphor, just a way of thinking about things. Red, green, and blue pixels. What are they? Well, actually they're radiant electromagnetic energy in the visual spectrum.

That's how I perceive them. So if we think of, it's light. So from that perspective, it's just they're different frequencies of the same thing.

What's light? Well, that's a very interesting question from a physics point of view. But the metaphor is actually quite nice. Because if you think of red, green, and blue as just different frequencies of the same thing, they're just part of this spectrum of radiant electromagnetic energy. Well then, there's a kind of unification there. So if you look more carefully at the



actual substance of inner see, hear, feel, sure enough, it's sort of like vibrating space. And in fact, outer sight, sound, touch has the same quality. So it all becomes an integrated arabesque of energy.

Vibrant, but sort of transparent. And then you come to realize that what's churning those vibrations, fermenting them, fomenting them, is that with each sensory and motor arising, there's a kind of effortless efflux and a simultaneous effortless influx that churns those vibrations into existence the way foam is born in the cleft of a hokusai wave. You know, there's that famous picture of Mount Fuji seen in the cleft of a wave, right, by the Japanese ukiyo-e artist, Hokusai. So the expanding wave and a simultaneous contracting wave, there's a shear, and in that shear is born vibration. And that vibration, if it coagulates, creates the inner, the sense that there's a material world on the outside and a thing called self on the inside. But if you see it just as it is, there is just this effortless efflux and reflux. Like a fountain, a formless fountain of youth that's constantly gushing and gathering, its center is wherever your attention goes, and its perimeter encompasses the whole self and scene.

That is the dynamic side of the source. That is the deepest experience of the Dharmakaya in terms of its activity. However, that activity comes from and returns to an absolute rest that always pervades it. So it's eternally, it's a kind of eternal fountain of youth, a formless womb that moment by moment gives rise to self and world as it activates. But it arises from and returns to and is peppered by Shalom Bimromav, the peace of God's own heaven. There's this prayer, I remember it vividly from being a little boy.

We in synagogue, Oseh Shalom Bimromav, hu ya'aseh shalom, aleinu ve'al kol Yisrael, ve'ibru, amen. May the one that creates Asiyah, it's a creation, may the one that creates the peace of his own heaven give peace to you and all of Israel. Of course, for me, Yisrael doesn't mean a country, it's anybody who struggles for the Lord, Yisrael, it has a meaning in Hebrew, struggle to experience El, the source. That's my interpretation of Israel anyway. Other people have other interpretations, I'm sure.

But I've chosen that, it means sanga, okay? Not a race, not a country. So sometimes I'll sing that, that's what I mean. The shalom, the peace that comes with completeness, shalem, shlemut, that's what the Christian poet T.S. Eliot called the still point of the turning world that I quoted from last night, at the still point of the turning world. Their movement from nor towards the restful part is when the movement in and out ceases. When the movement in and out starts, well, that's when the creative activity occurs. In the Jewish mystical tradition, that pulling apart of hesed and gvura, of contraction and expansion, they even have terms for it, it's just amazing.

It's amazing. It's called tzimtzum, it creates a space. And then that space vibrates. So that's what happens for everyone in each moment of inner and outer seer feel.

And in each act of speech or body movement or thought. That's the primordial great perfection. To touch it is to know true love. So that's to understand yourself at the deepest possible level. And it's if that becomes a moment by moment reality, then it's quite easy to have this sense of wanting to, of kinship with everyone, including people you don't like. You relate to flowers, but you can also relate to garbage cans. You can relate to your personal heroes, but you can also relate to people you fear or dislike or embarrass you.

The trick is to realize that that's always first, before the reactivity can arise. There's nothing wrong with judgments. I have nothing wrong with judgment, okay? I definitely have opinions. I like certain politicians, I don't like other politicians, okay? I have my opinions. But I know for sure, before my opinion arises, when I first look or hear that person, the first thing that I experience is the source loving them into existence. That does not preclude me having opinions and judgments. It's just, it makes a very different context to things. Amor primero.

## LATE NIGHT SITTING CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE ~ Shinzen Young

So, yaza, it means night sitting or extracurricular sitting.

It's a tradition. At a lot of retreats I give a whole talk about strategies for doing it and why people do it. So maybe I can give you the executive summary. At night there's an alternation of brain chemistry that occurs and that can sort of give you an interesting perspective from which to do the practice.

Different themes tend to come up. For one thing, each wave of sleepiness induces a wave of rest. That's why people lurch because actually what's happening is there's physical relaxation. So you can get into a rhythm where if you happen to be sleepy, you won't necessarily be sleepy, but you may be at some point sleepy. What happens is that you notice how the sleepiness comes in waves. Each wave will tend to cause the body to physically relax and it could also cause sea rest and hear rest. It could turn off the mental talk and it could cause either bright light or darkness, sort of an undifferentiated visual experience. So at least feel rest and perhaps also see rest and hear rest get triggered rhythmically by rhythmic waves of sleepiness.

Now if you can sort of get into that rhythm, then what happens is you're re-engineering the experience of sleepiness into the experience of meditative absorption. Because there's something, if you've read about, if you've read sort of the Abhidharma or Buddhist scholasticism, there's something called the Bhava-Anga-Solta. So Bhava means existence, Anga means support or underpinning and Solta means stream. So what is the Bhava-Anga-Solta? Well, that's the boundary zone between the conscious mind and the unconscious mind. Now in meditative absorption and in falling asleep and in dying, in those three circumstances, we dip below the Bhava-Anga-Solta.

So there's an intimate link between those three things. And the ability to drop below the Bhava-Anga-Solta and not lose consciousness is a big deal. In fact, to live and function below the Bhava-Anga-Solta is to solve the koan that I'm going to give you, actually.

I just gave away the answer. Living like ordinary life below the stream of existence would mean that you're alive in the unborn, you're functioning from the unborn. So all-night sitting is an opportunity to explore dipping below that boundary zone. Now, if you dip unconsciously, then you're going to have the Zen lurch, okay.

But if you get into the rhythm that I'm describing, it will just take you deeper and deeper. Let's see if I can remember. Ani yeshana velebi il. That's how you say it in Hebrew.

I learned that last time in Israel. Ani, I, yeshana, sleep, velebi, and or but, my heart, my consciousness, il, is awake. I sleep but my heart waketh. It's from the Psalms. The Latin is ego dormio sed cor meum vigilant. And that was used as an ideal by the Christian monks in the Middle Ages when Latin was the language that was used. The canonical hours that the monks keep, which we still have remnants in our language in words like matinee and noon, okay. It's known as the ninth hour, etc., etc. Matins is the afternoon, maybe the morning, lods.

I can't remember. There's a certain set number of hours that the monks kept and very few orders still do this, but a few do. And essentially, it's like a radical disruption of the sleeping cycle because they never get more than a few hours sleep and then they have to go to the chapel and either do chanting or singing or have a liturgy of some sort or mass or something. And I think it's like seven times in a 24-hour cycle. So, it's like they waken up in the middle of the night, well, they're just sleepy all the time. And that's a lifestyle thing.

It never varies, ever. So, what's that all about? Why be sleepy all the time? Why never get any continuous sleep for your whole life? Well, for that reason, ego dormio sed cor mea vigile, you learn how to bring consciousness into sleep. So, it's not sleep anymore. What is it? Well, in Christianity, it was called infused contemplation. But in Buddhism, it's called formless jhana. So, one way to go about that that's used in Zen and obviously also was used in Christianity is to re-engineer the sleepiness thing. So, one facet is you can sort of ride it into these delicious restful states.

Of course, it takes a little practice, like a lot of practice. So, I'm not guaranteeing that you will experience I sleep but my heart awakens. And tomorrow morning, be enlightened and live the rest of your life in the unborn. But you can take some sort of step in that direction.

Now, I'm sort of convincing myself that I should join you. Look what Choshin's doing. She started that. She knew this was because she was shaking her head even before she knew that I was like convincing myself that I want to do this. Well, now you probably think I'm a wimp, right? That I can't do it. Well, prove it. It's like the army, right? Sir, could you do that? You know, you're supposed to be able to ask your sergeant to do anything he asks you to do, etc.

etc. But, now I'm really convincing myself. Well, the truth is you deserve my A game tomorrow, which may not manifest if I'm too sleep deprived. I can still function, but maybe not the A game function. Okay, so, but other things come up.

It's not just explore the restful states. You may never get mental images. Well, at three in the morning, maybe you have mental images.

Dreamscape starts to replace the landscape. And that could be, oh, well, image space is never available to me. Well, maybe it'll be available at three this morning.

So that could be a little window of opportunity. The world is solid. Well, at three in the morning, maybe it won't be so solid as your eyes swim.

Now, you might say, well, that's bullshit because that's just, you know, you're just tired and that's an optical illusion. But it's also a place to stand to explore visual experience. And if you do an awful lot of that, it will give you insight into the impermanent nature of see out.

That's there when you're quite recovered and looking quite normally at the world, you still have this knowledge of flow within that experience. So a whole lot of interesting things can happen as a result of the yaza. So there are reasons to do it. There is also, of course, you know, it can sometimes be uncomfortable. Physically, there's this icky, sticky, creepy, crawly, sort of like yucky on your face, right? Coagulated yucky and sort of excruciating yawniness that just sits in your chest hour after hour after hour. And then there could be all sorts of emotions that come up because we're in a little non-composementus.

I mean, it is the classic way to break people down, right? Brainwashing and so forth. So now I'm giving you the answer. You're really selling it now. What kind of sales pitch is this? Who wants to buy this product? However, people that are committed to this practice know that there is such a thing, there is a thing called working through stuff. And the same process that breaks people down also can break people up, if you follow the distinction. To be broken down is a disempowering experience of abuse. To be broken up is an empowering experience of abuse. You're broken down, it means you're like shattered glass. Broken up, you're like a spray of pure steam that now joins the flow of nature forever. So anyway, I didn't intend to talk about Yaza, but let me just give those of you that have never done it, first-timers, I'm going to give you a reality check. How many people in this room have done an all-night set? How many people in this room have done it again? So you can see this is not like, oh my god, no one could do this kind of shit kind of thing, right? So there you go, that's my Yaza rap, extemporized.

## LAUGHING MEDITATION WORKSHOP ~ Stephanie Nash

I'm pumped, and then you'll see me cupped in. What I didn't get a chance to do last time, because we were in the Zen Do, and it was a formal meditation, so I didn't get a chance to really introduce this, or give some exercises, or a certain way of kind of working with it, practically.

So I wanted to take advantage of this to do that. Laughing as you know, is like a universal language, it doesn't matter where in the world you are, everybody knows what that is. We all share that, as human beings.

And laughing muscles, by the way, it's the same as crying, right? It uses the diaphragm the same way. And I'll talk about that in a second. And oh, see, I have my whole iPad, but then it goes off, and then I see my cute puppy there. And it's used, I mentioned, for therapy, when my mom got cancer, they told her to laugh. I've used it with people who've been locked into depression, for you facilitators. Especially any emotion, but especially depression, because anger and fear have an energy to them, and depression doesn't, and there's a dynamic energy that can happen here, that can suddenly shift a habit of this and go, oh, I see, my energy can go a different way. So that's a practical use of it. Physiologically, some people, body functionings get better, digestion, things like that. You're massaging, right, all sorts of internal organs.

And of course, flow is better than a single digit integer, greater than one in my thought. I thought I'd say it. Okay, so it's something that we can practice, and just like concentration, sensory clarity, and equanimity, we practice them here so that our lives get better, not so that we're really good with our eyes closed, right? So laughing is something that you can practice and stretch like a muscle, and then in your life, there's more of a chance that things will be funnier, or it can literally open muscles. I'm going to talk about how actors work with their instrument, their bodies, their instrument. And you want your instrument, you want it to be open to any possible choice of an impulse that may happen in a moment.

So you have to stretch the body in certain ways. And if you want to play the Queen of England, hanging out like this doesn't quite do it. So you kind of got to work with that. You got to play someone who's frightened all the time.

Just kind of bringing the body like this might help. If you're playing somebody who laughs all the time, just kind of hanging out like this and looking around, it just kind of changes how you see the world. So you can just kind of play with how the body can affect your emotions. And that's something that I just want to mention, that laughter is a subset of this bigger category of the physicality of the body and how it can affect our mind and our emotions. And I just gave examples of ways to hold the body, but in acting, for example, there is a way if I want to create somebody who's fearful, I could just hold the body like this without any thinking and those feelings can come up.

Right? If I want to be confident, I can do Wonder Woman, right? Or whatever. And those feelings. So I just want to mention this as an aside to meditators, because I first started teaching something called body unlocking, and laughing was a small part of it, but where people, I'd hear the reports at retreats of these great insights into, okay, let's use fear, of an insight into, oh, wow, I have that response. People really doing some deep processing and experiencing this freedom, and then they get up off the cushion and the body goes back into this.

And they say, I don't know why, but I keep getting those fearful thoughts, or that those fearful feelings keep coming up, and I kind of want to say, well, that's kind of an engraved invitation. That's how we create them, as actors. Right? So I just want to throw that in, and

that's what I do on the outside, is kind of this getting the body kind of, so that it's supportive to the internal process. Here we work with mental image and internal talk. We have the body posture in sitting practice or walking practice, but we don't really deal with this other part of it.

So I just want to throw that in there, since laughter is a subset of that, although laughter is unique unto itself, because it is not just a way we hold the body, it's a dynamic expression of sensory feeling, and it uses breathing and breath in a very dynamic way. And I'm sorry I didn't wait for everybody, but I'm recording it, so you can always keep playing. Does that make sense, what I just said? Yeah. Cool. All right. So, oh, okay, that was all I had to say that I had notes for. All right, so what I wanted to do was mention two techniques that two master teachers, one an acting teacher, one a meditation teacher, have used to kind of help goose people into big laughter in a certain kind of way. And then when I do laughing meditation, I don't try to goose people into big laughter, I just let whatever arises, arises, and just the sound of someone with a silly laugh can get you going, as we've discovered last time.

But I wanted to use what they present as a kind of warm-up for us in that stretching, because it uses a dynamic use of breath. So first is a master acting teacher, when I was at the Yale School of Drama, and we had our check-off class, and everything you hear Shinzen say about Roshi kind of applies here. And someone would do something, he'd say, no, laugh! And she'd go, I thought I was laughing. And he'd say, no, and he'd slap his hand on the table, and he'd let all the air out of his body, and then make whatever sound was whatever left that sounded like the end of a big laugh, and then you had to gasp for air coming in, and then he would continue expanding and contracting in this uncontrollable laughter, as we just kind of stunned watched him and then realized later we were laughing too. His name is Earl Gister, and I do this today in honor of him, because right after I studied with him, he lost his voice and has a voice box with throat cancer.

So this is in honor of sharing with other people who can't hear him anymore what he gave us. So I have to sit because he sat when he did it. But I will demonstrate what he did, and we can try it as an exercise for 30 seconds.

He would slap this, let all the air out, and go. And I've been in silence, and I haven't done this in probably 15 years, 20, but we'll just see how it goes. Now that was a technical use of pushing out air, just letting whatever's out there. And I thought, just as an exercise, this isn't our laughing meditation, this is a warm up. So if you would like to try it with me now, you can feel free to slap if you'd like to. But, just try it. But, this is for spending, really. Breathe. That's good.

What do you wanna do? So you get the feel of how that just kind of, right? You can see how you just get kind of warmed up and then you can't even talk anymore. Alright, so, Nicola Geiger. How many people here knew Nicola? Okay, for those who didn't, she was one of Shinzon's first teacher. And often refers to her as the first functioning bodhisattva that he ever knew because she welcomed mobsters and monks alike. And she would come to retreats, she's a big German woman, she went through Germany during a difficult time and was part of a white rose movement. She'd come to retreats and she'd have her cane and she had a laugh that would make Santa jealous. And she would say basically, and now my dear, it is time for a laughing meditation. You know, she would just kind of, does that kind of sound Nicola-esque? Right, she'd say, hello my dear. Right? And so she, we were talking, I was having a private session with her one time and I didn't know about, I'd never seen her do a laughing meditation. I told her how I was using laughing in performances and things.

I thought it shifted people's energy to always put it in. And she'd say, I'm going to show you how to do a laughing meditation. And then she had a very technical way of doing it. Now once again, I'll kind of give you a little taste of what it is. I cannot do Nicola's laugh.

I just don't have the mechanics for that. But I will give what she taught me. I took notes. I haven't looked at them since she taught me, what, seven years ago or however long it was.

I don't know. So she had, it went ho ho ha ha ha. Okay? And she would have us clap or she would use her cane. But it would be ho ho ha ha ha. It would be like that. And so she'd start, you'd get through about three of those before you go home.

So it would be something like, to do it without you guys makes it a little bit of a performance. So I'm just really trying to do Nicola's laughing meditation. I'm visually visioning her here.

So it would be, okay my dear. Ho ho ha ha ha. Ho ho ha ha ha. Ho ho ha ha ha. Ho ho ho ho ho ho ho ha ha ha ha ha.

Ho ho ho ho ho ho ho. And she'd do that whole big laugh. Right? And then we'd go off because just listening to her laugh once again made you, I'm not a ho ho ha ha kind of, you know, I go more hee hee. You can add a hee hee. Hee hee.

Ha ha ho ho. Okay? So just in honor of Nicola, who is no longer with us, but today we honor her as well. And you don't have to clap, but she insisted I do. So you must clap, would be what she would say, something like that. And then of course when you're done you ring the bell, you know.

Yes, she would do that. You wouldn't be able to do it without ringing the bell. So we'll ring the bell. Ding.

Ha. Ready my dear? Ho ho ha ha ha ho ho ho ha ha ho. Ho ho ho ho ho ha ho ho. Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Okay! Are we warmed up now? Okay, good. Are we warmed up? Okay. Yes, my down.

So, that was Nikola. So, those of you who have heard her, that would sound familiar, right? Okay, let's do a laugh. Okay, and then, I don't know what's going to happen, because whenever we do a laugh in meditation, I don't know. It's usually, I'll do it at the end of a set.

You know, the way people do meta. Maybe if we've gone through a lot of focus on feel into dark places, if I've guided something, it would change the whole energy in the room. I might do it before we, I want people to work with flow. Tune into your bodies right now, just from doing that.

Feel any flow? Okay, that was less than 60 seconds of laughing. Right? So, I'm now going to guide, oh, and so, when I guide, it's a nice closed practice. If you want to open your eyes, just like any practice, open or close as you will, but I find there's, actually, someone told me that there's only so much real estate in consciousness. And, you know, and then he'll say as emotions expand, IQ contracts, but what I'm going to say is, it's like with eating meditation, you close your eyes and you can taste more. So, in the same way you close your eyes, you can really tune into the feel and the flow, and it'll be a focus in, focus out, focus on sound, and some people get a lot of image, I get none. It's just, it's a total other thing for me, but, you know, you now have plenty of techniques.

So, go wild. So, what we're going to do is you're going to close your eyes and I will guide it in the air, okay? So, we're now going to do a meditation. A meditation called a laughing meditation.

And laughing is optional. And feel free to jump in at any time, but I will give some guidance. Maybe I won't. Feel free to slap your hand if you want. Feel free to laugh. Feel free to laugh. Feel free to laugh. Feel free to laugh. Feel free to laugh.

And whether you're laughing or not, you can tune in to expansion and contraction, and relaxation. Feel, feel, feel. Feel, feel, feel. Feel, feel, feel. Feel, feel, feel. Feel, feel, feel. Feel,

feel, feel. Feel, feel, feel. Feel, feel, feel. Feel, feel, feel. Feel, feel, feel. Feel, feel, feel.

Feel, feel, feel. It's a good abdominal workout. Did you guys laugh? I did. Take a nice deep pleasure. We'll sigh every day.

Big breath in. We need another one. Okay. Big breath in.

That was 10 minutes. Okay. In honor of all laughing meditation people everywhere. Okay, so close your eyes and tune in to your body. What's going on? And if sounds happen, it's just like the laughter shocks, right? So, you know, if you have to laugh, laugh.

But just really tune in and feel the flow. Where are you feeling? Anything that wants to spread, let it. Open to the massage from the inside through the body.

What's the face feel like? Belly, hands, feet. It's very serious. Very serious. And hear the sounds of laughter. Other people's laughter, you can feel it on your body.

Other people's laughter. No, spirit, stop it!ización no mi vida yn bo frodo I'm so sorry. As much as it pains me to do this.

The next time she shoots it, it's a film. Don't let me let you stop laughing. And my prescription for life, if you do ten minutes of this a day, no problem.

You know, you can pepper your day. You can stop, pause, go to nothing, and re-manifest with a... Go to nothing and re-manifest with a...

You know? Start over and die. Why not? I make my actors all learn to laugh on cue and they're not allowed to fake it. And they have to laugh in a way that makes us all laugh. And the first time someone does it, they go... And I go, no. And I go, Kevin.

And Kevin will go... You know, they'll just jump right into it. So it's a great skill to develop.

And it's great at a party. So thank you all for exploring this physicalizing of feel. Expanding. Thank you. Thank you.

## Many Facets of Enlightenment ~ Shinzen Young

How much does the path one takes towards enlightenment affect the nature of the enlightenment? The quick and easy answer is if you were to focus only on the breath and come to an enlightenment experience through that, it would be essentially the same kind of experience that a person would have if they did a more systematic deconstructive path or if they did a reconstructive path like the Vajrayana path where you sort of create an alternate identity from scratch that's archetypal.

I would say they all take you to essentially the same type of experience. But having said that, the confounding factor is that although it's essentially the same ballpark, enlightenment is like a many-faceted jewel. There's so many different sides to it. So what side you're going to emphasize may slightly be influenced by what path you took, but not necessarily. You might take a certain path there and when you get there, decide to emphasize something quite different in contrast to what the path was that took you there.

Also it unfolds with time. One of my teachers used to say, 今日の悟りは明日の間違い That means today's enlightenment is tomorrow's mistake. Not mistake in the sense of fundamental mistake, but in the sense of, well, Newtonian physics is basically right, but Einstein had something to say. And then Richard Feynman had something else to say that built on this. So it's like science. It's many-faceted.

So it will present itself to you over the years in different aspects. For example, my main teacher, Sasaki Roshi, when I met him, he was already a master's master. I mean, he was already a senior Roshi when I first met him. He's now 102, 103.

I've known him for 25, 26 years now. Over those two and a half decades, I have seen him evolve and hone his paradigm and change his emphasis. So he was already a master's master and he is discovering new facets of this at that level. So I would say that the path that you take will somewhat influence how you conceptualize the experience, but it's not necessarily going to constrain it in some way. And in fact, you may end up doing something quite different, ending up with quite a different paradigm. So I would say it's a matter of depth and what facet you're choosing to emphasize, rather than a matter of what technique you use to bring you to that.



# Mindfulness Strategies when Interacting with Others ~ SHINZEN

## YOUNG

Now, on retreats, we normally are keeping silence.

But I got a note about in daily life when we're talking to people, how can we formulate strategies for meditating or for doing a practice when talking to people? Well, sometimes when you're talking to someone, it's a substantive conversation. So you really need like 100% of your CPU to be carrying on that. So in those cases, you just have to accept the fact that you can't actually implement a, or you, no, I don't want to put it that way, you may not be able to implement an intentional strategy because you have to just be paying attention to what's going on. However, there is a gradation in our conversations with people with regards to how substantive the conversations are. A lot of conversations that we have with people are not, do not require our total CPU, if you follow my metaphor, to be engaged with that person.

So we get an interesting figure ground reversal here. Normally good conversations are ones that are substantive. And just listening to somebody blabber or shoot the breeze with vacuous social clichés or what have you, those are considered like not great conversations.

But here's where the figure ground reversal comes in. Those now become the great conversations. You understand why? Because you've got some wiggle room, you've got some extra energy that you can use to implement a formal strategy. So you can just listen to people talk and talk and talk and talk and talk and talk and talk, okay? And it's great, the more they talk and the less you talk, the easier it is to continue implementing your technique.

So it gives you a completely different way of thinking about interactions. So then you train yourself. You are responding to them, you're not spacing out, but you're training a variety of possible focus strategies.

So what are some of the things that you could train under these circumstances? Well one thing is you can use part of the focus out thing. You can anchor yourself in the sights and sounds of that person. You're really listening and you're really looking. That's one strategy. Another strategy is meta in the body. You sort of, you know, we look at people, we smile, it's sort of a social convention, but you can use Samadhi to inflate that social smile into a real like whole body experience of unconditional love just pouring out of your pores. It can be trained and it's very, very powerful once you learn how to do this.

So one of my most common strategies for meditating in conversations is, okay, the sights and sounds of the person or the loving kindness kind of thing. Other strategies are possible. The important thing is you sort of pick your battles. You say, okay, guess what? In this conversation, I got enough wiggle room that I can respond appropriately and be implementing this technique. So people often worry though, well, if I'm implementing a formal technique while having a conversation with someone, number one, people have two worries. First it's like, well, I'll get so involved in the technique that I won't be able to be appropriate. That's the worry number one. Worry number two is I'm going to look weird or they're going to see that I'm like secretly doing this, whatever.

Okay, so let's address the first concern. Like the proverbial, you know, pat your head and rub your belly. Or is it, yeah, I guess it's that way. That's really hard.

Okay, whatever. So you might be a little awkward initially, but people usually don't notice. And then you gain some facility to it. You can keep the technique going and, you know, respond and you don't feel awkward at all. So yeah, you might need to be willing to feel a little bit awkward initially because you're not using the ordinary strategy that we use when we're having conversations with people. The ordinary strategy that we use when we have conversations with people is we're constantly going into our see-in, hear-in, feel-in system to plan what we're going to say next.

Constantly being pulled back into the subjective world. Now you're starting to, I mean, of course that could be a technique. You could be observing your see-in, hear-in, feel-in reactions to that person. However, in that case, you're observing them. You're not actually buying into them or using them to plan what you're going to say next. So, that's where the little awkwardness may come in for a little while because it's like whatever strategy you're doing, even if it's observing your reactions, certainly if it's a focus out or a radiate love from your body thing, you're not constantly now going back to see-in, hear-in, feel-in to figure out what you're going to say next.

And if you pay close attention, you'll see that's what we constantly do. So you might feel a little bit awkward, yes, initially. But then you learn that you actually don't need to constantly go to that place in order to be appropriate. So that takes care of concern number one. Concern number two, well, they'll know that you're like doing a technique. Well, guess what? Your technique is not to disengage from them. You are anchoring in their sights and sounds or you are radiating in all directions, including their direction, unconditional positive regard. So in fact, you're more engaged with them. In fact, what disengages people is that constant pulling towards your own mind and emotions that's reactive or planning and so forth. So if that doesn't happen, then actually people feel that you're like really giving them attention.

You're giving them time and space and people find that very attractive. The less something you have inside yourself as you're interacting with a person, that sort of emptiness is like a magnet. That person, unless they're an experienced practitioner, has a constant pressure of seeing, hearing, and feeling. You're now learning how to communicate with that person without having within yourself that constant pressure of seeing, hearing, and feeling. That creates, in a good sense, a vacuum inside you.

So it's like an osmotic gradient or a pressure gradient. The ego pressure that they have can dissipate in the space of your ego absence. And that creates a force that attracts people towards you, a kind of magnetic force.

They don't know why, but they're pulled by that pressure gradient, if my metaphor makes any sense at all. So be willing to take a chance and start flapping your lips without planning what you're saying. And as you get better and better and better at that, you will eventually learn how to ride the ox backwards.

That's a Zen metaphor. The flow of expansion and contraction itself will begin to move your lips and tongue for you. And you'll discover that magically powerful and appropriate things are moving across your teeth without you actually quite even knowing until it's too late.

But then it's like the magic happened. It takes a long time to train the ability to do that. And you have to be willing to somewhat throw caution to the wind and just, as I say, start manifesting. A lot of times people work against themselves in meditation practice because they go into like some really deep state and then the bell rings and it's like, oh, I got to reconstitute myself in order to be able to deal with the world. Well, that's like wasting what you just did.

Okay. It's like, no, the whole idea is you're in this really deep state, you're sort of spacious and disoriented. The bell rings, time to deal with the world. Just continue to be spacious and disoriented and start moving. And yeah, there might be a little awkwardness initially,

but you'll discover that all that is needed is the activity of the personality. The somethingness of the ego is not really necessary to navigate the world and to interact with one's fellow beings. So the whole idea is it's like the bell rings and no, don't like, okay, I got to get myself in the world solid again. No, no, no. You just start being space, moving through space and let the manifestation occur.

## MINDFULNESS with SICKNESS ~ Shinzen Young

So, I'm aware that some people are dealing with the challenge of being sick and so forth. Well, it's interesting, in a Zen temple, being sick, they have all this special vocabulary for everything.

Ordinary things all have their own sort of like special things. So, they don't say byouki, which means the normal Japanese word for being sick. They have this expression byousou, which means the symptoms of illness or the appearance of illness. So, instead of saying this monk is sick, they say this monk is showing the form of sickness, like the appearance of sickness, byousou, meaning of course there's a little bit of an implication that there is a sensory experience of being sick.

And then that is a form, a manifestation. The implication of course being that eventually you want to be able to escape into the sensory event of being sick, the byousou. And the Japanese, there's another word in Japanese that there's just no English equivalent, which is narikiru. Narikiru means you deal with it by totally becoming it. You so become it that everything else is cut off. Naru means you become.

Kiru means you cut. So, you so become it that everything else is cut off. You utterly achieve oneness with it.

Or a more idiomatic expression in English might be complete commitment. There's a complete commitment to just experiencing being sick. Now the good thing is, the lucky thing for us, is if you are sick, I'm going to encourage you as much as you want to sleep and rest and take breaks and so forth. But in the Zen temple you're not allowed to do that, no matter what. You have to follow the schedule no matter how sick you are. And that is really misery. I didn't get sick much, but every once in a while. We got inoculated against Japan encephalitis because you get bit by mosquitoes, right? And oh man, I had a reaction to the shot. But it's like there's no mercy.

You just have to keep doing the schedule, right? No matter how you feel. I'm remembering now. I'd forgotten. That was very unpleasant. It was summer too. It was like hot. Of course, a lot better than getting Japan encephalitis.

But anyway. So yeah, there's actually a long tradition of using the sickness for your practice. But here, you know, you have the luxury that you can take it easy if you need to. But even when you're taking it easy, try to make you not begrudge the fact that, oh, I got sick now, I can't have a retreat.

That is the retreat. And in daily life, injury, illness, visiting the hospital. Whenever I work with students that they're calling me from the hospital, I'm having this operation or that thing going on, I say, I always have a stock phrase. I say, okay, you're having a non-consensual retreat. You're being forced into a situation where there's nothing to do but explore the prospect of happiness independent of conditions.

Because this condition is going to go on for a little while. Before there was Chan, or as the Japanese call it, Zen, in China, there was Tantai. That was the first meditating school of Chinese Buddhism. And that was actually at a relatively early period before the Tang, during the Sui dynasty is when that started. And then it gained momentum in the early Tang.

They came up with a very interesting way to meditate. The lineage did not survive, though, the lineage of practice, although the texts have survived. Other lineages like Chan or Zen and Pure Land and so forth survived in China, but Tantai didn't, although it has been preserved in Japan.

It's called Tendai in Japanese. The reason I'm mentioning it is that the first meditation manual that I'm aware of in the Chinese language was written by the Tantai Dasher, the master who created the Tantai system. It's in 10 chapters and it's called the Moha Jurguan, which means... Moha is actually a Sanskrit word incorporated into Chinese. It's Maha, which means big, right? Or great. Jur means in Mandarin means to stop. And Guan means to see or observe.

So the great stop and see. So stop, it translates Shamata. And see or Guan translates Vipashana. So before there was the word ZuoChan in Mandarin, which is Zazen in Japanese, that's the normal word in Chinese and Japanese for meditate. But before that word existed in East Asia, the word for meditate was Jurguan, which means to do Shamata Vipashana, to do calming, concentrating, but also observing insight mixed together.

In any event, before I practiced meditation, I was an academic studying it, a scholar of it. And I was fortunate because before I even got interested in Buddhism, I was literate in both Chinese and Japanese. I could read those Asian languages fluently. So all my early study of Buddhism was done actually by reading books in Chinese and Japanese about Buddhism. And one of the books that I read was this manual by Tiantai. It's something that was written in the 7th century AD in China.

So it's like over a millennium ago and half a world away. But you could sort of have an intimacy with the person that wrote this by reading what they had to say and reading about their struggles. The reason I'm mentioning this is 10 chapters, and just like I attempt to do, he very systematically lays out the nuts and bolts of practice and relates it to various scriptures, particularly the Lotus Sutra was central to this particular school. So one of those chapters, it's an entire chapter devoted to just the whys and wherefores of practicing when you're sick. It was a long time ago that I read it. I don't remember the details, but I remember thinking, oh, Tiantai must have himself had a lot of health challenges and it must have been very difficult for him to achieve what he achieved. And that's probably what's motivating.

This is probably based on his own experience. So it's like a whole section, it's like a tenth of the book. The first meditation manual in East Asia is about not begrudging the fact that you're sick. But okay, you do this, you do this, you do this, you do this, here's how you can treat illnesses. I seem to remember now there was some Chinese medicine in there. I also seem to remember that there was some Taoist magic in there to sort of make certain kinds of spirits cause certain kinds of illnesses and you can militate against them with this or that.

I seem to remember that, but mostly what I remember is the notion, okay, you're going to get sick. That's just an opportunity for practice and don't begrudge the fact and just don't lose a beat. Use it for your practice. So you know how you can do that within the context of what we're doing, you apply a technique. Basically if you have a sensory challenge, there are two fundamental strategies and you can, there's plan A, plan B and you can alternate plan A and plan B. Plan A is turn towards it, untangle, unblock, not acute, totally become it. How do you go beyond hot or cold? When it's hot, you boil to death.

When it's cold, you freeze to death. You just become it. So that's plan A. I call that strategy turn towards. Now when you take a turn towards strategy, you need concentration, clarity and equanimity to do that successfully. The flip side of that is by attempting to focus on it in a systematic way, you will develop concentration, clarity and equanimity. So it's an exercise in those skills.

So you are developing those skills, but now you're also applying those skills to deconstructing or having a complete experience of whatever the sensory challenge is. Plan B is turn away. So turn away would be in terms of possible focus range. Well, you could, let's say that the challenge is the physical discomfort of an illness. So what is the sensory gestalt for physical discomfort? We talked about it in the group process this morning. There's the uncomfortable physical sensation and then there's the reactivity of the inner system to that.

The uncomfortable physical sensation will often resolve into one or more local intensities and then a more subtle global spread. Subtle is significant. So you've got local intensity, global spread in feel out, the physicality of the body, and then you have the inner system, mental image, mental talk and body emotion reacting possibly to that or being impacted by that.

So that's five sensory elements, local physical discomfort, global physical discomfort, mental image, mental talk and body emotion. So you can work with the parts, you can work with the whole, untangle, unblock. That would be to focus a turn towards strategy.

What's a turn away strategy? Well, anything that's not that. So you could anchor insights and sounds. Sometimes when I work with people who have severe chronic pain, acute chronic pain, the only thing they can do is they just have to get away from the mind and the body because the mind and body are just untenable.

The only thing they can focus on is sights and sounds. So anchor out or maybe you can access restful states. See rest, hear rest, feel rest, or maybe you can nurture positive image, talk, body, emotion. So an alternative strategy, plan B, is turn away. Now there's a tendency to think that if I turn away that's denial and suppression. Unfortunately there's also a tendency to think if I turn towards that's just going to make it worse and reinforce it. I think you can see that if you buy into those two beliefs you literally have no place to turn.

You've set yourself up for abject suffering. So what I would like to encourage people is to consider that in fact both of those options are viable strategies. Why? Because the turn away also entails concentration, clarity, and equanimity. Your ability to do it depends on those skills. On the other hand, the attempt to do it builds those skills.

So you're developing and applying the same skill set. Concentration power, let's say you're anchoring in sight and sound because the mind and body are untenable. So you get pulled away from sights and sounds so you keep coming back. That's concentration power. Sensory clarity, well the sights and sounds might be subtle relative to the intensities that are going on in mind-body space. Well that ability to detect subtle things, that's a sensory clarity.

Or specifically when you're working on restful states, see rest, hear rest, feel rest, typically the restful states are quite subtle relative to the activations. But you're developing sensory clarity by the ability to detect. Remember sensory clarity has two, depending on how you want to look at it, three sub-dimensions. Resolution power, the ability to distinguish.

Sensitivity, the ability to detect subtle signals. Those are different things. They both come under clarity. If you want to make it more complicated but also more traditional, you can say there's another aspect to clarity, what the Seyedahs call penetration. So, okay, one aspect of clarity is detection. So the ability to detect subtle things may be involved, probably will be involved in a turn away strategy. And how about equanimity? Well, your willingness to allow the sensory challenge to expand and contract in the background while your attention is focused in the foreground on something else, that's background equanimity.

So, like I say, I like to divide the skills not only into dimensions but sub-dimensions. So the ability to open up and turn towards, that's one kind of equanimity, foreground equanimity. The ability to turn away but at the same time open up in the background, that's actually a related but independent skill that I call background equanimity. And I encourage people to develop both of those equanimity skills. Now we've talked about concentration, the ability to hold something small, but also the ability to hold something large, the ability to hold one thing for a long period of time, or the ability to taste momentary concentration on a variety of things.

These are dimensions within the clarity skill. So I'm going to say that if you elect a turn away strategy, that you are developing and applying the core skill set. If you elect a turn towards strategy, you're doing exactly the same. So if you think about it this way, it's a win-win situation.

Either strategy is legitimate. And what you want to avoid is the lose-lose situation, which is, I don't want to turn away from it because that's just denial and suppression. I don't want to turn towards it because that's going to just exacerbate it and reinforce it.

So now you have nowhere to turn. So anyway, if you happen to have a sensory challenge of any sort in general, and specifically if you're struggling with an illness at a retreat or that kind of thing, these are some things you can keep in mind. And so when you're in the meditation hall, try to be aware of your breathing that may come about through sleepiness or through some discomfort that you're going through.

Open your eyes, straighten your spine, etc., etc. Most of you know this story, but this is how I learned about that a lot of times you don't realize how disruptive you might be. So I'd been meditating for, I don't know, maybe a year or so, and I went off to this Soto Zen temple called Antaichi. And so this is one of these Soto Zen, so you meditate facing the wall. I was already a Shingon monk at the time, so that means that I was wearing robes. And underneath, so you have sort of these robes, but they're not very thick. And then underneath that you have a kimono. And it's a winter kimono, but kimono is not really designed for cold weather.

Okay, it's great for the summer, the air just comes through, you know. But I was really, really cold. And I was sick. I got sick in the middle of the thing. And I was really, really miserable. And, you know, no heat in the zendo at all, right? And it's like winter. So I guess I didn't realize it, but I was like...all day. So like, the second day of the session, you're facing the wall, right? You can't see anything behind you. And I go to sit down and bang, someone punches me in the nose from the back with a Kleenex stuck to my nose.

And I couldn't see who it was. I guess the only word that I can think of is Vesuvius of Rage. All day long. It just over and over again. How dare that motherfucker. I didn't know who the motherfucker was.

It was someone, almost certainly a Japanese monk. So now I've got all that going on. And you can't do anything.

You just have to face the wall and face yourself. I mean, I got the message, okay, you know, dude, you've been an asshole. You've been sniffing this whole time. So now I, okay, I won't sniff anymore. But oh my God, I was so angry and so uncomfortable. And there's just nothing you could do. It's Soto Zen, it's 50 minute sits, 10 minute walk, 50 minute sit, 10 minute walk.

I think they did 14 hours of sitting each day, something like that. And you're facing the wall. No talks, no nothing. It was hardcore. It was shikantaza. It was like just sit. And there's nothing to do but just face that inner hell and deal with it.

Which is sort of awful, but not nearly as awful as not dealing with it. Some of you have sweated with my friends Wolf and Lisa, the traditional Native American sweat lodge. So anyway, it's Lisa that does the really hot sweats. She's full blood Lakota Sioux.

I don't know if that has anything to do with it. And we were in a sweat once and she was saying, I know this path is hard. I know this path is hard. I know this path is hard, but there's one thing harder than this path. Harder than doing this path is not doing this path.

And it is so true. So, you know, I could have been the person that wasn't miserable and sick and beat up in Japan. I could have been not that person. That would have been so much

harder.

So much harder. I think I mentioned in the last retreat, maybe I didn't, but an acquaintance of mine wrote a book called 10% Happier, Dan Harris. He's on the nightline, right? And I think ABC, Good Morning America or something like that, right? He's like a talk hoe, but he's one of us. He famously had a panic attack on camera at some point in his career, which you can actually see it's on YouTube. It's like, we'll be there forever, right? And that was his wake up call that he had to, something was radically wrong with his life.

And a major part of his recovery was to take on this practice, mindfulness practice. But because he's in the position of being a prominent television personality, it's sort of cool for us. So he wrote this book called 10% Happier. And he's got a whole program that goes with it. Actually he's partnering up with one of my facilitators, Jeff Warren from Canada. They're on tour now in the US, sort of bringing the message of mindfulness.

It's so cool that we're that mainstream at this point. Anyway, the title of that book got me thinking about my own life. So, you know, 10% Happier. And I started to calculate in my mind, did like a thought experiment.

Okay, at my current age, what would the picture be if I hadn't made that decision at the age of 25 to, by hook or crook, meditate every day of my life? What if I hadn't done that? What if I'd just been one of the million other things that I could have been as a non-meditator? So where would I be, given who I was at 25? Extrapolating, where would I be? And then where I know myself to be as the result of that decision. And objectively, I just, I had to say, it's not 10% happier, it's 10 times happier. I mean, objectively, easily 10 times happier. Or put the other way, I would be one-tenth as happy, which actually would be like pretty miserable. So anyway, I encourage you in that regard.



## Music Meditation on Cho's iPod

Shenzhen gives an example when he started doing music meditation. He gave an example, he refers people to your iPod a lot.

Would you just explain a little bit about what's happening on your iPod and why Shenzhen is referring them to you? Sure. Music is very, very important in my life. When my house is empty, I fill it with music.

Not always, but when you have a household of people and they leave, it's like, I can listen to my own music now. So I found, I love classical music, and when he teaches the music meditation, he will use a technique of vanishing or gone. He uses the rest, and he uses the active states.

I don't know if we're still using that term, but active states. So what I did is I went through my classical music and I categorized it. Things that had, for instance, the gone, you know, there's moments when there's no sound. And so then you can note the gone. So I have about four or five pieces on my iPod that I've labeled meditation, music, gone. And then I have four or five pieces that are rest states, and four or five pieces for pure sound.

Now, somebody else might not find those pure sound, but to me, they fill me so that I can just be the sound. And I've actually loaned my iPod to many people, and they've taken them off. So I especially use it when I'm flying. I was just going to say, how are you using it primarily? When I'm flying, when I want to relax, when I want pure sound and just be the music, to take myself out of the marketplace, that's when I use it.

## New Year's Eve in The Old Days ~ with Shinzen Young

Charlie left me a note reminding me about the old days.

Where are you Charlie? Right here. The really old days that he can remember and a few of you can remember. The really old days I had a center in Koreatown.

We did exactly the same thing that we were doing here. That was 25 years ago. So it's downtown LA and it's a long time ago. We used to do exactly what we do. We'd sit in the New Year, every single New Year we would do that.

Except it was a lot more dramatic than we're going to get to experience. Because they hadn't yet outlawed the pistoleros. I think it's now illegal, right, to shoot off firearms in LA? They still do it. Well, it wasn't even illegal. It wasn't even discouraged.

We were right in the heart of downtown LA. So what would happen is – yeah, I'd forgotten all about this until Charlie wrote that note. But Charlie and Judy remember. Anyone else go that far back to CMC? Not in this crowd.

Oh yeah, Robert. So what would happen is we'd do our set and then you're in Samadhi and to some extent pretty mellow. You're doing your chant and it was the same things.

You know, money, pot, lay home, exactly the same. But what would happen during that half hour or so as you're approaching midnight is that the sonic activity around would escalate. It would just be like a few rounds here or there and then it's like more and more and more and more until finally it's like the Battle of the Bulge. And then you hear the sound of semi-automatic weapons.

And I mean next door. I mean you can see the flash. And you know you can hear the sound of a semi-automatic weapon.

It's not just like a gun or something. It's like, it's like crazy, crazy sounds. And we're just like totally blown away. And the contrast was really, really great.

And you know it's like, well like they say, you know, it's good for your practice. So that was New Year's, yeah, back in the old days. I was thinking of the daytime.

Yeah, the daytime was pretty crazy too. We were, that neighborhood is, it's Koreatown, it's right where Koreatown intersects with an El Salvadorian barrio. I don't know what the ethnic thing is now. And then you have a whole Chicano thing also going on.

So and it's downtown. So all of our retreats, every single retreat, all day, you could hear, you'd get the mariachis from one side, you'd get, the Koreans were very quiet, okay, but there were also a lot of Vietnamese. And so you'd get sort of the Sino-Vietnamese Peking opera kinds of sounds coming. There was always at least one Florence schizophrenic person acting out on the corner. And you got the turf wars going on. They actually ended up blocking off our street with cement barriers eventually. People couldn't even come in the LAPD because it was such a hot drug selling area. And they were right on our front lawn. I mean, literally on the front lawn. And you could hear the turf wars. People would get into fights. You'd be sitting and meditating and it's like you would actually hear people like slugging each other, I'm going to kill you. That's the way, that's the old, that's what you were remembering, right? Do you remember the Chinese Buddhist saying you used to remind yourself? Oh yeah, I can guess what that was.

Let me guess. I probably said if you want a small enlightenment, go to the mountain. If you want a big enlightenment, come to the city. That is a Chinese proverb I heard from one of

the Chinese masters. So we used to meditate right in the middle of the city. And so it was a very different New Year's experience. We hear, sometimes we hear a little, you know, like hooray or something.

If we're lucky, if we're lucky we get something from the neighbors. It's not like the old days. That was, that was pretty, that was pretty cool.

The contrast. And also it was really good because you learned that you didn't have to have silence in order to have deep practice. You know, that's the beauty of mindfulness, you can just recycle the reactions. So that's what we used to do. What got a little bit difficult was a lot of people got their cars broken into.

You know, usually I'd have to counsel someone after a retreat dealing with calling the cops. And that was, those were the crazy days. Things are a lot more mellow now. So I guess we can appreciate that.

## ON-THE-FLY PURIFICATION (from solo retreat) - Stephanie Nash

It's an interesting practice to use when noticing internal talk. Whenever there's internal talk and I notice it, I stop and notice what tension in the head or body has happened because of that internal talk. Then I relax and release that. And if there was an emotion with internal talk, I might find that and really like feel it fully and then kind of open to it and release it in a certain kind of way.

And then that affects how strong the next talk on that topic comes, if that makes sense. That's my on-the-fly purification process. This is my last organic night here, I guess I'll say. Tomorrow night will be a closing ceremony, so I'm just reflecting on the insights I've gotten and I feel gratitude for the view.

## Organizing Your Practice ~ SHINZEN YOUNG

I had you do the theme blast yesterday, right? But it was scheduled to be the modality blast. Is that right? We were pissed.

So we're going to amend the schedule so that we don't get a chance for the modality blast. We want a refund. I'm a paid guy. Wait till you hear my fee schedule.

TS Eliot, you know, costing nothing less than everything, and I'll show you well. Okay, so today I wanted to talk about organizing your practice. So it's a little bit of a lecture thing to start with.

Particularly, there are a number of you that are first timers that will be leaving today. So I wanted to get this conceptual piece clear. So the way I think about organizing one's practice, symbolically I think of two cycles.

Delta cycle and maybe an epsilon cycle or a y cycle. So this is day to day and this is year to year. You can imagine that these are actually cycles that are going around. If you can establish these cycles, you have a very high probability of success with your practice.

So the day to day cycle is each day try to do some formal practice. And the bottom of this pyramid stands for formal practice. Here's how I define, I'm going to be very precise in my definitions. So here's how I define formal practice. Formal practice means that you have a set technique or a set sequence of techniques and you implement that. And that's where the majority of your resources are going to maintain that technique or sequence of techniques for a period of time. That's formal practice. By way of contrast, this top of the pyramid here, that stands for what I call practice in life. Often people will do a period of formal practice in the morning. Some people do morning and evening. It's good if you can do formal practice most days and it's good if you can do it at the same time, same place, if that's possible.

But if that's not possible, if it has to be a different time, a different place, okay. If it's not most days, that's okay. But ideal, the standard that most people do is in the morning because that sets up the whole day to be optimal for practice in life, which we'll describe in a moment. So, in order to be able to speak with precision about the elements of one's practice, so we'll use this defined terminology. Formal practice, for example, if you were doing a noting technique that involved mental labeling, during a period of formal practice there would be unbroken labeling and you'd be implementing that technique.

Now, there's two ways to do formal practice. Practice in stillness, where the body is essentially not moving, or not moving much, seated, standing, lying down, that kind of thing. And practice in motion, where the body is moving. And so I distinguish, when I say practice in motion, it means formal practice, as opposed to practice in life, okay, which we'll talk about in a moment.

So, this is how I use the terms. I encourage people to definitely do formal practice each day, if possible, or most days. If possible, include both some practice in stillness and some practice in motion, or at least occasionally have formal practice in motion.

Why? Because we want to have, that will make it easier to have carryover into practice in life. So, what is practice in life? What we're doing right now is an example of practice in life. Some of you are listening to the content of what I'm saying and allocating resources that way, but probably some of you, every once in a while, are going back into a technique, maybe for a few seconds here, or a minute there, and then you're sort of like coming back. Or maybe some of you are mostly just doing a technique now, okay. You're just patiently listening because they've heard it a million times.

You know exactly what it's going to say, but don't be sure, I might surprise you. So, you're going in and out of formal technique, or of technique. That's practice in life. So, we'll talk about what techniques in a moment, but first we're going to talk about these cyclic rhythms. So, I would encourage you at least, if you're committed to this practice, which I'm pretty sure everyone in this room is pretty committed to this practice, try to do at least a half-dozen times a day, have a little micro-hit where you go into a technique, 30 seconds here, 3 minutes there, you're waiting in line, you're walking to the washroom, you're having a vacuous conversation with a co-worker, you're at a meeting, where you don't have to be engaged, but you want to look like you're engaged, but see out, you're out.

Gone is really useful. So, you're implementing a technique, but then it's like they call your name at the meeting, okay, now I'm back to business, that kind of thing. So, it's a back and forth, but at least a half-dozen times each day, you really do the practice.

I call those surgical strikes, peppering the day. It may not be for very long, and when do you do it? You do it when you don't need all your CPU resources to deal with life. But when you deal with life, you just deal with life, that's okay. You allocate your resources to what you need to do, but during the day there's a rhythm of, you know, needing to allocate resources to take care of business versus needing that less. And when you need that less, go back to a well-defined mindfulness technique.

30 seconds here, 3 minutes there, what have you. The combination of the peppering of the day with the surgical strikes plus attitude. Attitude is important for practice in life. And what is the attitude? The attitude to take when you complete the basis here, your morning practice, assuming you do it that way, you want to walk into the day with an attitude, if possible. And what that attitude is, is that this whole day is a monastery, a place where I'm going to apply and hone my skills. And you just think of your, you monasticize your day conceptually. So we don't live, we're householders, we don't live in actual monasteries.

But you can think of your day as a monastery. And thinking of your day that way, first of all, makes every day meaningful. Every day is meaningful.

Either it's meaningful because great stuff happened, or maybe not great stuff happened, but it was a day of productive training. So, this is a Chinese phrase, er shi hao er, every day is a good day. It's a Zen expression. And that's what it means.

There's another one which I won't write in Chinese. One Zen master said, the average person is used 24 hours a day. The person of Zen uses 24 hours a day. So, armed with that attitude, and peppering the day, this will monasticize the bulk of your day. And then you have your formal practice here. There is an option, something you can do as a kind of add-on to practice in stillness. A structure that will vastly, vastly increase your ability to maintain mindfulness in daily life.

And there's an add-on that you can do to practice in motion, which will have the same effect. One of the most common laments that I hear is, well, I come to retreats and I can get into all this great stuff, but then when I go back to daily life I can't maintain it. Well, first of all, we have to accept that to a certain extent that is true. You come to retreats to get to a new level, you may not be able to maintain exactly the peaks that you reached at the retreats. But you don't want it to just go back to square one, okay? You want it to be some sort of plateau, and then your next retreat leads you to some sort of plateau.

So, you keep this up for however many years you live, there's going to be probably an exponential envelope to that sort of step-wise growth curve. In general, retreats tend to take us to a new level, but we don't want that to be a peak experience. We want to maintain that. And we want to maintain that not only in terms of our experience in formal practice, but we actually want to elevate the base level of mindfulness in daily life. Remember, the long-term effect of this practice is to elevate the base level of mindfulness in daily life. You'll recall I defined your base level of mindfulness to be how clear, concentrated and

equanimous you are when you're not trying to be that way. Intentionally, that's the base level. You want to reset that base level over and over and over again.

So, there's a special version of practice in stillness that you can do that will tend to elevate the base level of mindfulness when you're not trying to be mindful. Just what you have in daily life. And there's something you can do here.

So, I've already actually described them. I do it every retreat. Now I'm going to do it again. But it might help to sort of see it visually. So, if you come to me and you say, I am not satisfied with my base level of mindfulness in daily life. Just how I am when I'm not trying to be.

If you come to me, I will ask you, did you try this? And have you tried this? If you say no, I'm just going to say, try it, and then come back to me. So, what is this here? I wrote TP. And I wrote MC. This is slightly new vocabulary. I've used other phrases previously. So, for today, what we're going to call the add-on to practice in stillness.

Actually, well, yeah. The add-on to practice in stillness. I'm going to call it trigger practice. Those of you that have been to previous retreats or done the home practice, I've talked about media practice. Well, trigger practice is a generalization of media practice.

And motion challenge, or a challenge sequence in motion. You've heard me talk about before, but let me explain. So, what is, and I talked about this in this retreat, but let's just say it again for the sake of systematic completeness. So, often when we do practice in stillness, we're just sitting there, not a whole lot comes up.

Okay. Sometimes things come up, depending on the rhythm of life and our own subconscious unwinding. But a lot of times, not a lot comes up. But as soon as you're bopping up in the world, as soon as you turn on the 6 o'clock news, as soon as you negotiate the freeway or the workplace or the family or whatever, stuff's coming up.

So, I encourage people to work smart. I remember years ago hearing an interview by a Japanese baseball player who was playing in the US. And they asked him to contrast the difference between baseball in Japan versus baseball in the United States. And he said, the Americans are stronger, but I think we Japanese play smarter. Well, I would like to reverse, I'd like to turn the tables on that.

Okay. The way people get enlightenment in Japan, in a Zen temple, hey, this is samurai boot camp. This is brute force. This is brute force training. It's anti-intellectual, it's no-mind, it's just a body beaten into submission through exhaustion and etc., etc., etc.

Until you just give up and go into the no-self. So, it's strong. It's a lot stronger than what you or I are willing to do. Okay. Let's work smarter.

So, how do you work smart? You train yourself systematically. What comes up in the day? Well, joy, interest comes up, rage, terror, grief, in the extreme case, irritation, nervousness, poor me, what have you, stuff comes up. But in stillness, you see, when we're doing practice in stillness, it's the ideal place to train. It's analogous to the empty parking lot where you're going to learn how to drive, and there's no pressures on you.

But then, what's daily life? Hey, that's LA freeway at rush hour, in the smog, with people shooting at you. So, it's not the best place to just devote yourself to training the skills of driving. You're going to have to have parking lot first. So, what the bad news is, the empty parking lot doesn't have typically the full range of stuff you need to deal with.

And I don't just mean negative stuff, I mean the full range of everything. So, you can, upon occasion, do practice in stillness where you are exposing yourself to sound sights or physical sensation or some combination thereof that is likely to trigger the full range of things you want to deal with. So, you can sit there, you can close your eyes, you've got the

remote control, and you can listen to whatever you want to listen to.

All the sounds of the world are there. And when you're in a deep sitting, I mean, just try it, okay? You say you never get images, okay? I never get mental images. Well, listen to a real dramatic movie with your eyes closed, okay? You'll see image space goes nuts trying to give you an impression of what's going on in that action movie, okay? You never get emotional sensations during formal practice? Okay. Close your eyes, go really, really deep, totally go into restful states, then click on the 6 o'clock news and see what happens to your body.

Or turn on the politician that you most loathe and fear. Okay? See what happens to your body. I promise you it will be the limbic system. The limbic brain is your emotional brain.

They've even done, you might have read on the internet, they've done studies of, and it doesn't matter what your political persuasion is, whether you're like liberal, conservative. When you are exposed to the opposite point of view, it is absolutely expansion and contraction. This area here, which is your higher executive function, contracts, okay? And your amygdalae and your hypothalamus, I mean your hippocampus, and all of these, this whole emotional brain thing, totally expands in activity. It doesn't matter what your political perspective is, okay? You're listening with your emotional body.

And what's interesting, I find that I'm not going to pursue this can of worms any further, but both sides try to use this data to prove that the other side is, you know, irrational. Okay, so you can do this kind of trigger practice upon occasion, and you can work with one or a combination of whatever kind of stimuli you want to present yourself to. And over a course of time, you simply systematically train yourself to have an automatic, mindful response to every possible trigger that could come up in daily life.

And when you do it this way, in formal practice, you control the type, the intensity, the duration, and the timing, the frequency of the stimuli. And it's like weight lifting. You don't want to overburden yourself. You just work against an edge. You lift an appropriate amount of weight.

You get stronger and stronger and stronger, and that strength does not then dissipate. It's with you in daily life. That's media practice or trigger practice, or for all of them. Motion challenges, you, let's say that there's a technique that you'd like to do, and you can do it pretty good with your eyes closed, seated. Well, can you do it with your eyes open, seated? Can you do it with your eyes open, standing? Can you do it walking around in your room? Can you do it walking around outside? Can you do it walking around in the city? Can you do it while you wash the dishes? Can you do it while you prepare a meal? Can you do it while you prepare a meal you've never prepared before? Can you do it while you're having a vacuous conversation with the neighbor over the back fence? Can you do it when you're having a substantive conversation with someone, maybe a significant other? You give yourself a challenge sequence like that for any technique that you would like to learn, to master.

And that will tend to train you smartly, systematically, to maintain, or to have a high level of baseline mindfulness in daily life. So, this is the day-to-day cycle. This is the delta steps for day-to-day cycle. So you establish, you do certainly some practice in stillness, but don't forget practice in motion. And then you can do the practice in light kind of thing.

Then, Upsilon, or Y, stands for the year. Yes? Are you putting trigger practices that are recommended dosage for a week? No. Find what works for you. But at least try it, at least occasionally. Or, if you don't need it, then you don't need it. Like I say, if you come to me and say, I don't have enough carryover into daily life, I'm going to say, exercise due diligence, I gave you some ideas, let's work smartly.

But no, no particular recommended, whatever you think. Yeah, a question again on trigger practice. In your example, you was like an outsider to a remote control. How about if you



intentionally bring up something that you don't have something to do with? Okay, very good. I call that evoking. I have a different term for that. I think I gave a spiel about evoking, right, in the group process.

Were you here? Yes. Okay, so, yeah, I consider that to be yet another thing. I don't make that as major as this. Because doing the evoking is, I don't think, it depends on the individual. I mean, do what works for you, right? But evoking still somewhat requires two hats. You got to sort of bring the stuff up and then you just got to observe it.

And even though you separate those tasks, there still are two tasks. Trigger practice is completely passive and really controllable. And you would, so, it's, you have much more control here. You can be much more passive and just do technique. And you have the, part of the control is that you can choose exactly the type and intensity of stimulus you want to work with. So it gives you the possibility of essentially in a systematic way training yourself for everything. I remember I had this, like, huge, sudden, sort of classic breakthrough a very, very long time ago.

And what I did the next day, I turned on the radio and I found the most disgusting program that I could. It's called Anglo-Israel. And what it is, I still remember, it's like, some of you out there may be under the impression that Jesus was a Jew. Would God be born as a Jew? No.

Jesus was like you and I. An Anglo-Saxon. And then it goes on to try to prove that the inhabitants of England from the 6th century on were in fact the chosen people. And that's who the Bible is talking about.

That's you and I, the white people that live here, the wasps that live here in America. So, and then I just listened, okay, and I was in bliss. Just totally bliss. Whereas before, it would have not been that. Okay.

So you can find whatever you want to work with. Okay, so we've been on Delta Force. What's the P? The P up top. Pepper. The little practices throughout the day. Peppering.

Here's your attitude. Okay, so now, the Upsilon cycle. The Y cycle. It's year to year. So the base of the year to year is just keep this up for the years of your life.

Keep the Delta up for the years of your life. Then, throughout the year at least once, if possible more, do retreat. Retreat practice.

Now, you can slice and dice your retreat practice any way you want, but you want to get some retreat practice in. So you know my hobby is math, etc. So in math, we often try to imagine something called the trivial case.

Now, when I say the trivial case, that's not a pejorative, okay. It has a specific meaning. It's what is the simplest thing we can imagine that still has the characteristic of some structure. Okay, a group or a ring or a field or a vector space or, you know, there are these structures. What's the simplest case that's not so simple that it lacks that structure? That's called the trivial case.

So I ask myself, what is the trivial case of retreat? What is the shortest, simplest, most convenient thing we could possibly do that's not just a long sit, but actually sort of comes under the rubric of retreat? And I came up with the four-hour micro-retreats that make up the whole practice program. So it's like, okay, it's a four-hour period. It's structured in a certain way. There's preparation, but all the elements are there. There's Q&A.; There's a little bit of talk. There's even a chance to talk one-on-one with the teacher.

Not a wide window, but you could if you needed to. There's guided practice. There's self-work. And it's unbroken continuity of practice for four hours.

And the delivery system is telephone as opposed to people have to travel, expenses leave their family, et cetera, et cetera. Well, you know, it works. Okay, we've never advertised it, but it's growing exponentially.

I know when we started we had – they're about twice as large now without any advertising at all. And when we finally get it all together, then we'll roll it out. When I get everything manualized. And then we could probably have thousands of people doing this. But in any event, so no one can say that they can't do retreat practice if they speak English and have a telephone. And access to a computer at least occasionally. And we can tell the world proudly if you cannot afford the token \$20, then don't pay anything ever, forever.

Just get cheap long distance or use Skype, it won't cost you anything. And you can do retreats forever for nothing. And they're liberation-oriented retreats.

They're not light, okay. So, to me that's the trivial case of retreat. So, if you do one four-hour retreat every single month, that's sort of the equivalent of a half-day retreat per month roughly. Okay, well, that sort of adds up to a week retreat. That would be a residential situation. This is bare minimum.

By the way, bare minimum for formal practice day-to-day is ten minutes. There is, I repeat, an infinite difference. Infinite difference. The ratio of ten to zero is infinity. Okay, there's an infinite difference between doing ten minutes each day and doing no minutes each day. And there's no one that can say, oh my day is so busy I don't have ten minutes.

If you're not doing the ten minutes, it is not a time thing. What is it? It's a resistance thing. And when you finally scour down into what the resistance is, you will probably discover it's not that big a deal. Fifty percent of the time the resistance is in the subtle agitation flavors that come up in daily life that you're going to have to face if you...

stop on the dot. So, usually that's all it is. Okay, so you can do that. But of course if you can do one or two residential retreats, hey, that's really good. Or maybe you do one day retreats, etc., etc. But try to get some sustained practice where you're doing it for more than an hour and more than two hours. So, periodic retreat and then periodic contact with at least one teacher who is competent to sort of give you big picture guidance on your practice touch base. Typically it's at the retreat that that contact comes. Because you have an interview, an online...

Even as I say, with the whole practice program, people call me, they only get ten minutes, but at least they can touch base on their practice and I can ask them a few pointed questions and so forth. So, if you establish these two cycles, you have a very high probability of being a very happy camper. Now that's sort of the big picture of structure. Now we need to look at the more micro picture of structure. That's the macro structure. What's the micro structure? The micro structure is, okay, what techniques are you practicing? And as we all... We're going to have to wash this board because it looks like it's beginning to stain.

We don't want to leave, we don't want to look bad. So, the way you could... Assuming you want to use the basic line from the system, then you sort of think of this grid. It's a three by four grid. And then down here you've got another thing that has six boxes. Actually, let's put it over here. Then it will follow the theme blast.

Here is do nothing. And here is the possible themes for nurture positive. Positive affect, positive behavior, positive cognition, ideal, which is the archetype of a tar thing, situations, laws of attraction, manifestation, and other A, B, C, I, S, O. So, you can think of organizing what you do in terms of making choices from this array. So, there's three basic possibilities.

One is for a certain period of time, a week, a month, your whole life, whatever, you just do one or maybe two techniques. It's sort of monolithic. It's like, okay, this is a catalog and I'm

going to buy this. Or maybe I'm going to buy this whole row, this whole column, or this whole row. Or maybe I'm going to buy this, or this. So, it's sort of like one or two things and that's what you do. So, there's no choices, at least for a certain period of time.

Like I say, a week, a month, a year, your whole life, however you want to do that. That's the simplest. And because this grid does contain not all, but a significant percentage of every fundamentally distinct strategy for meditation worldwide, organized into a unified framework of sorts, it basically allows you to pick from the whole world as to what you'd like to do. So, there's nothing wrong with keeping it simple. Maybe you want to just explore your body. So, you're going to play this row, broad float inside this row. And that's all you want to do.

You just want to penetrate the body in terms of feel in, feel out, feel res, feel flow, and their ventures. And that's all you do. So, one choice, you're going to play this row. And that's what you do.

Or maybe two choices. You're going to play this row, and then I'm going to do loving kindness afterwards, so nurture positive affect. So, that keeps things simple.

There's nothing wrong if that appeals to you, with keeping things simple. The other possibility is for a period of time, week, a month, a year, your whole life, you create a set sequence. Either it's one that you create yourself, or it's one of the standard ones that I tend to guide people in. And that's what you do. You go through that sequence.

So, it's like a cycle of exercise equipment, or a yoga thing. And you can actually repeat the sequence. That can be very interesting. You can cycle through it.

You can go through more than once if you want. The common sequences that I give people are the modality sequence, where we broad float, broad float, broad float, then really broad float, then just not gone, and then choose one of these. Then there's the theme sequence, where you play the columns. Broad float, this column, this one, this one, so in, out, rest, flow, then you go to do nothing, then you go here. Of course, this chart, if you sort of look at it this way, is that cycle.

It actually is a picture of the theme cycle. You can also do a mini blast with regards to one of the columns and rows. For example, let's say you really, see, there's actually four techniques represented by this column. There's each of these individual, and then there's play the whole column. So, this is the focus in family of techniques. So, you could play the whole column, broadly float, then scroll through, five minutes here, five minutes here, five minutes here, say, and then broad float again.

So, what have you done? You get the big picture, then you go in for close up, now you're back to the establishing shot, but when you come back to the establishing shot, because you've done all this close up work, things are likely to be more mindful, maybe more pleasant, more fluid, etc. So, you can do like a mini blast for a column. You can do the same thing for a row. You can focus on C in general, and then touch base with in, out, C in, C out, C rest, C float, and then go back, do the whole thing. Maybe you want to create that kind of set sequence.

So, you could do a theme blast, a modality blast, you could do a mini blast for any of the rows or columns, or create your own personalized workout. Now, let's say that you want to incorporate some things from this system, but you also want to do other things that aren't in this system. Well, actually, if you came to me and we discussed it, there's probably a pretty good probability that the other thing you want to do that's not in this system actually is in this system, because you just haven't thought through all the subtleties of all the options. Because half the time when people come to me and say, well, this isn't in the system, but I'd like to do it, I say, well, you remember that option and that option, well, you put those two together and actually it's in the system.

But let's say it's not. Everything that's not in some way covered by this taxonomy, I call special exercises. And special exercises, I've got my own special exercises, okay, that aren't on here that I might give you from time to time. So, absolutely do special exercises. You can mix and match and slice and dice this paradigm with anything else you want from practice.

Because to me, I'm a lover, so I see the commonality. Anything you're going to do in some way or another is going to develop some aspect of CCM. And from that perspective, totally compatible with the basic mindfulness system. So, you can, if you might want to, create some sort of sequence where you mix other stuff in.

That's great. However, now the advantage to set sequences is when you exercise a lot of psychospiritual muscle groups. The disadvantage is it's a little more complicated than just doing the same thing every day, keep it simple. The greatest complexity comes when you loop and branch.

So, these are terms from computer programming and so forth. Now, this is what I do in my practice, but that doesn't mean it's what you need to do. What works for one person doesn't necessarily at all work for another person. So, although you might think of it as a decision tree, it is actually not mathematically a tree. It's actually a cyclic graph, because you can loop as well as branch. So, you sit down and you determine a starting place. Where am I going to start? So, that's technique one, whatever that is.

Let's see if the note is larger. So, at some point, you sort of say, okay, well, what am I going to do now? And it might be that at that point, you say, well, I'm going to just keep on doing this, because it's working. Maybe that's all you do that day. But maybe at this point, you say, well, you know what? This window or this wall came up, and I would like to switch to this. I'm going to branch to this other thing, because that's going to take care of this. That's going to optimize my utilizing the window of opportunity, or it's going to be an efficient way to deal with the wall that's an advantage over what I was doing here. And then maybe you just keep on looping back to that. Or maybe at some point, you say, okay, I've dealt with the wall. Now let's go back here.

Or maybe you dealt with the wall and it turned into a window, which says, let's do technique three. Then whatever happens, happens. At some point, it's time to end up. And so maybe you end up here, or maybe there's a certain TE, a certain technique that you like to end with. Maybe it's nurture positive. And who knows? Maybe there's a certain TB, a technique you always begin with.

That's optional. And then in between, you loop and branch based on interest, opportunity, necessity, but not driven by craving, aversion, and unconsciousness, and most importantly of all, not making a big deal about these decisions. Everybody follow that logic? You've heard it before many times. So that's looping and branching. These are cycles.

These are branch points. So that's really complicated. But for some people, that's interesting and optimal. So you can do that if you wish. So you decide whether you want to have one ball, or whether you want to have a sequence of balls, that perhaps you repeat. Well, you do repeat if you do it the next day, but maybe you repeat during the same session. So maybe one or two balls, or a sequence of some sort, or you're going to have an algorithm that loops and branches in complicated ways. Those are the three ways that you can use the grid to organize your practice.

# Our SUBJECTIVE Experience EXPLAINED (See-Hear-Feel

## technique) by Shinzen Young

Mental images, mental talk, emotional body sensation. So in general, if you look from the side, mental images tend to be sort of centered here, but they can be around your surroundings, and they can also be back where your body is. But memory-planned fantasy tends to sort of be up and in front.

Talk tends to be posterior and up, and then the emotional body is primarily down with the body. So very, very roughly speaking, you've got a triangle like this. It's an oversimplification, but it's a way of thinking about it. This is the center of the inner space, but the inner space can be broad, it can be quite wide, actually. So emotional body space is just the space of your body. Some people have emotional centers, places in the body where pleasant or unpleasant emotional sensations would likely be most prominent. Some people don't have emotional centers. If you have emotional centers, then bringing yourself to your emotional body means some awareness strongly in those centers and some awareness peripherally over the body. If you don't have emotional centers, then just awareness in your body in general is to be in emotional body space. Talk space is typically ill-defined, but most people sort of point at their ears, their head, this area, it's the phallic. So abstractly and in an oversimplified schematic view, we can think of image space, talk space, emotional body space. Our descriptive word for visual thinking is mental image, but our label is see in. Our descriptive word for auditory thinking is mental talk, but our label is hear in. And our descriptive word for emotional body sensation is emotional body sensation, however the label is feel in. So whenever I think about this system, I sort of get this image of the triangle. But I also get the phrase that this system is reactive, proactive, interactive, and occasionally inactive. If you get this, you will have such a handle on life.

Such a handle on life. Because every heaven and hell that you will experience between now and the moment you die will somehow involve the four things that I just mentioned within this system. It's reactivity, it's proactivity, it's interactivity, and it's occasional inactivity. So let's see what that means. It means if you have external sounds, external sights, and physical body sensation, it could trigger one, two, or all three of these at the same time. So it reacts to the physical senses.

Producing what? Well if that reaction is unconscious and solidified, it produces the sense that there is a self that hears, sees, and is physically contacted. So if you're in pain, and this system is reacting to the pain, judging it, awfulizing it, and having rhythmic reactions such as fear, tear, irritation, helplessness, and so forth. So that's the self, alright? That's this system reacting to a physical contact, a physical world. So as a reactive system, when it activates, and it's not experienced with concentration, clarity, and equanimity, it will convince you that you have a limited self that is seeing, hearing, and in a physical world.

So on the other hand, we're not trying to get rid of this activity. It can activate to the max, but as long as there's clarity, concentration, and equanimity, in other words, as long as you have a complete experience of self. And by the way, equanimity is none other than total self-love and total self-acceptance in this regard.

So if it reacts and you experience it fully, then you love it to death. It's so active that it's no longer there as a thing. So there's...

Okay, so. So that's the reactive system. Every single time you're convinced there's someone inside of you that's a self experiencing an other that is alien and it. At some subtle level, the system is reacting to the physical world.

It may be subliminally below the threshold of awareness, and our job is to clarify it and unblock it and love it. That's the reactive. Proactive. Oh, you've noticed this. It's called monkey mind. When it's not reacting to the outside world, it starts spinning memory, plan, fantasy, problem solving. Fantasies basically two kinds.

Fantasies that you run to scare you, and fantasies that you run to entertain you when there's nothing else going on. In neuroscience, this is well known, it's called the default network. Default meaning it's what people fall back on when you don't ask them to attend to something in an experiment. They would tell people, okay, now just rest now. Okay, we're having you watch that target, that visual target now, do nothing, just rest.

And then they discovered they're not resting. There's all this distinctive activation going on by way of default. So what's happening is monkey mind. Is memory, plan, fantasy, problem solving, etc. So I call that the proactive system, meaning that the system will just go off on its own and spin memory, plan, fantasy.

Convincing you that there's a past, convincing you that there's a future, convincing you of many, many things. So that's the proactive side of the system. Once again, we're not trying to get rid of that.

We're trying to have a complete experience of that. Then the system is interactive. That means a mental image could trigger an emotional body sensation. Mental thought could trigger an emotional body sensation. Emotional body sensation could build until you just have to make a comment about it, or have a picture of it. A mental image could trigger a comment. A mental thought could make a picture to accompany it.

So the arrows point both ways. This is the interactivity of the system. And once you become familiar with the system, you can start to track how this will trigger this, and then this will lead to this, etc., etc. So that's the interactivity. And becoming clear about this is knowing yourself at a sensory level, at a system theoretic level.

This is the system theoretic paradigm for thoughts and emotions. Then the last phrase is occasionally inactive. Actually more than you might imagine. For brief moments, the system turns off hundreds and hundreds of times during the day. When you just hear, just see, just experience physical touch, for just a second, the system actually evaporates. But people usually don't notice it. So it doesn't help them. They don't realize that the self winks in and out of existence during the day. So when it goes inactive, we have a no-self state.

But unless you consciously experience it, it won't be liberating. So we want you to be able to notice when it's active and inactive. So that's the subjective system, and that's what we're going to work on today.

I'm going to show you how to work individually and collectively. So if we draw a column, we're going to use in as an abbreviation for inner arising. We use see to refer to visual experience. It's a verb of visual perception. Hear is the verb of auditory perception. Feel is the verb for somatic perception. So see in for mental images. Hear in for mental thought.

Feel in for emotional body sensation. We can work individually, and then we could broadly float. We'll call this focus in, within the whole system.

So let me say that most people have quite a bit of hear in. That's where we're going to start. So we're going to know hear in each time the mental talk arises. When the mental talk comes to an end, gone.

That's the period at the end of the sentence. And then if there is no mental talk, hear rest. Sometimes people find that by placing attention in talk space, it sort of like turns off the mental talk.

That's not suppression. It just is. It just happens that way. So you'll hear rest. You'll listen to that restful state. Otherwise, hear in, gone. Some people find that after the gone, there'll be a restful state. Some people find that there's immediately a new arising of the next word or phrase or sentence. So you'll hear in, gone, hear rest. That's how we can work individually with this.

This is actually pretty straightforward. Mental images and emotional body sensations require a bit of clarification. First and foremost, if you're new to practice, you may not have many mental images. And that's not a problem.

You just may not have many of them. So we're going to have you focus on the dark, bright, in front of, behind your closed eyes, which is, you'll recall, is see rest. Focus on that if you don't have any mental images. But if you do have mental images, we'll note that as see in. If all or even part of the mental image drops away or drops off, then gone.

You'll note the vanishing of all or part of the image. If you don't have many mental images, then fine, you'll just be see rest, see rest until they occur. Remember, however, that if you have memory, plan, or fantasy, you probably are seeing the memory scene, probably seeing the fantasy and so forth. We don't call it imagination for nothing. But it may be very vague and fleeting, just a ghostly impression.

That's see in. People often think that, oh, mental images, it must be clear like a photograph or like looking at a physical object. Only for some people, the great majority of people, the mental images are these vague, wispy, diaphanous impressions of form that disappear very quickly.

And that's see in, that's image. Remember also that if you are aware that you're in any particular place, if you're convinced you're in a room with people at a certain location, you probably get some vague image of your surroundings that's see in. And when you have body sensations, you probably get a sense of your overall body and your appearance. In addition to the sensations of the body, there's the image of the body. Once again, often rather vague and ill-defined. That's see in also.

So that's that. Feel in is, there's a lot to be said about this. So at any given instant, somewhere in consciousness, you may experience emotion. The alternative is at any given instant, you're not experiencing any emotion.

If you're not sure, assume you're not experiencing any emotion. So at any given instant, you may have an experience of emotion. That emotion may be well-defined qualitatively or ill-defined qualitatively. It may be intense or it may be subtle. Quite where that emotion is occurring may be well-defined or it may be ill-defined. However, at any given instant, you either have an emotional experience or you don't.

If you're not sure, assume you don't. If you are having an emotional experience, it is possible that part of that emotional experience will involve body sensations, a change in your body. If so, our label for that body sensation is feel in. It is possible that you have an experience that you'll say is emotional, but it's mental only and does not affect the body. In which case, there is no emotional sensation in the body. The emotion is completely mental.

That could happen. In that case, when we work with this, and you're having a mental emotion, but there's nothing that impacts your body. Your body is emotionally restful. So we'll call that feel rest. If you go to your body and try to figure out which sensations are physical and which are emotional, you may be able to do that, but you probably won't.

It will probably just be crazy to try to figure that out. Somewhat depends on the individual. The way that I set up this category, feel in, is not specifically I'm asking you to go to the body and figure out what's physical, and more generally what's emotional. If you can do that, fine, but most people, it's like, it doesn't compute.

However, here's something anybody can do. At any given instant, you ask yourself, am I experiencing emotion? Somewhere. Well defined, ill defined, okay, am I experiencing emotion? The answer is yes. Is any part of that experience, does any part of that experience involve body sensation? The answer will either be yes or no. If you're not sure, the answer is no. If the answer is yes, that's feel in, and that's what to focus on.

If the answer is no, then when we play this technique, your body is emotionally neutral. That is a flavor of rest. There are basically three flavors of rest that can come up in the body. Physical relaxation, emotional neutrality, and the sense that there are parts of the body that aren't there, or that your body is disappearing. Those are the three basic flavors of feel rest. When we do this, if there is no emotion in your body, then feel rest. It is quite common for people to, when they try, when they do see in, that they mostly just see rest.

It is quite common when people do feel in, that they mostly just feel rest. In other words, the synthetics don't activate. This usually activates, but sometimes it doesn't even. Now, are you going to make it a problem that there is nothing but rest within this system? Please don't. Someday it will activate, I promise you.

Now, so a common complaint is, well, when I do formal practice, and I try to work with my subjective experience, it's all rest. The system doesn't activate. It goes inactive during formal practice. Or this part might be active, but these other two parts aren't. During formal practice, I can never get the feel in or the see in going.

So I have a, but then in daily life, of course, it is going, but I don't have the wonderful situation of being in formal practice to work with it. So what should I do? So what is my standard recommendation for this situation? Do nothing. Yeah. Or, in other words, of course, the do nothing is okay. You can just accept the fact that nothing is happening. But let's say that you want to be in a formal practice situation, and you want to be able to at will activate and control the direction and intensity of the subjective reactive system. Okay, which would be a way of working smart, a way of training where you're in control, so that when the reactive system gets activated in daily life, you sort of train yourself in ideal situations. Well, what I recommend is that you expose yourself to emotive sounds or emotive sights that activate the system. Sound is the best, because you can do it with your eyes closed.

It's easy to detect the images. So I usually recommend something like flipping around the TV and then getting things that activate pleasant or unpleasant. Feel in, you'd be amazed how many images you have if you listen to the soundtrack of a movie. Your mind would just immediately try to see what's going on, okay? And so it activates the whole system. And that way you train yourself to work with the system, and you can have the best of both worlds, because you're in a formal practice situation, and you're in control of the type, duration, and intensity of the stimulus for the system. So if you come to me and say, I'm not getting a carryover into life, I'm going to ask you, well, have you tried media practice? Have you tried training for life's impacts in stillness? I call that working smart. So at the retreat, if not much activates when we explore this, that's fine.

We'll just do the rest of the thing. But there are ways to intentionally activate it, and not necessarily in negative directions either, just all sorts of interesting things can be done. So that's the subjective system. Yes? Can we, while training here for a life situation, can we imagine ourselves in those situations, and then that system gets activated? I understand. That, the intentional, as a general principle, intentionally controlling the system is only something we do as focus on positive, which we'll be starting in the afternoon.

However, I said as a general principle. People will sometimes ask, well, can I activate it by sort of thinking about a certain something? I would say it's OK to do that occasionally. I wouldn't make that the centerpiece of your practice. Yes? In terms of feel, you're talking about the emotional body. What's the distinction between a headache and the emotional body, or is that part of the emotional body, or that thing? OK, good.



That's a good question. The way you know it's an emotional body sensation is by following that little procedure that I just gave you. In other words, if you ask yourself, am I experiencing an emotion? And then you go to the body and see if any part of that is in the body. In other words, you didn't have an emotion, then an emotion arose. What changed in the body, that's the emotional body sensation.

The places to look are reactions. If there's a sound and you're smiling, that's an emotional sensation in the body. If there's a sound in the environment and you're irritated by the sound, and it's not just mental comment about it, but you actually have an irritation in the body, that's emotion in the body. In general, I will give you a list of a dozen or so common situations where there is likely to be an emotional sensation in your body. Anger. When you experience anger, where do you usually experience it in your body? Are you asking me? Yeah.

How would you answer? OK, good. So that's an emotional body sensation. Fear. That's an emotional body sensation. Sadness. That's an emotional body sensation. Joy. That's an emotional body sensation.

Enthusiasm, interest. Not sure? OK. Shame, embarrassment. OK.

You got it. All of those are emotional body sensations. Physical pain? No.

That's a physical body sensation. However, if it causes an emotional reaction, then that could happen. So how do you work with that? Let's say I start to sit, I mean I came in with some physical pain, I start to sit and then I have emotional reaction to physical pain. It's not something I bring up, it's not something that starts when I sit.

Am I making any sense? Are you asking how to work with the pain or... Or the emotional reaction to it. OK. So in other words, let's say that you're doing the feel-in technique. OK.

So you are... the instruction is if you have what seems to be emotional body sensation you focus on. So now the pain, what flavors of emotion does the pain cause you? Fear. Fear.

Now you're very precise. So now you're going to be aware that the pain is one thing and the fear reaction to the pain is another thing. You're going to note that as feel-in.

The fear reaction. That sensation. Then what does note mean? Note means acknowledge and then focus on that sensation. As you focus on that sensation you attempt to accept that sensation. The fear sensation.

Remember I said reactive? So you're looking for the body reacting to the body. In this particular case. And then what do you do with it? Just try to make friends with it as best you can. Now, that's only one way to focus of course. You might want to focus on the mental images triggered by the pain. Or the mental talk triggered by the pain. You also might want to focus on the pain itself.

Or you might want to focus away from the pain onto a rest state. All of these are options. Just be clear which one you're doing. Did that answer your question sufficiently? OK. Excellent. Yes. I just want to clarify if we were working with this procedure. And we were having a lot of rest in C-in.

And a lot of rest in feel-in. We would not be noting that because we're not focusing on the rest. There's actually four procedures on the board.

So let's be clear what we're talking about. This is one option. This is another option. This is another option. This is another option. Right.

OK. So if you're doing this, the instruction says, if you don't have any activation, note the corresponding restful state. But if you do have an activation, then note the activation. Of

course, if you did it for a while and there wasn't any activation, then you might want to switch technique because you're essentially not just noting the restful state. OK.

Same thing for here. The instruction says it's crystal clear. As long as you're doing this procedure, which could be for two minutes or two years, however long you want to be doing it, if there's mental talk, you're in. When it disappears, go off. If there's no mental talk, you're at rest. And you just do that.

And then if it doesn't seem productive, you do something else. Crystal clear? Excellent. Yes. If you're in the rest state and you want to activate more active state, you recommend, like, turn on the TV. Can you use your imagination? Can you pretend you're in a traffic jam? Actually, that question was just asked a few minutes ago.

But I'll answer it again. In general, you are passive with regards to these things. You just let them, when you do this technique. So you are waiting for activation to occur.

If it doesn't occur, then you just note the corresponding restful state. However, if you find that the system hardly activates when you do practice in stillness, and you want to do something to sort of stimulate it so that you can observe it and practice up with it, then I recommend media practice. You can listen to a TV or something like that to get things stirred up.

But that would just be a sort of special thing that you would do to help train your skills. Is that clear? As far as intentionally bringing something up in order to have something to focus on with this, that was asked over here. I said it's okay to do that occasionally, but it's not really the way to do this. Okay. Good.

Yes. Sorry, I had a brain lapse. What does in at the top stand for? Inner activation. So this technique is see in here and feel in. Focus. Focus in.

Thank you. Focus, as it stands now, when something is prefixed by focus, it means broadly float within that theme or that sensory modality. Otherwise, we see the specified in the box. Okay, good. Good to go.

## Out-take - from Jan 2010 interview

We're back. I'm back! I heard the rumor.

## PART 2 of VISUAL PRESENTATION of MINDFULNESS & the SPIRITUAL PATH

Okay, so those are my three udanas, my three utterances. Now I'm going to put them all together in one diagram. And that diagram furthermore is going to show you how to store and retrieve everything I have ever taught you in essence, to put it on one page. So that's a lot of information and a lot of relationships between information. So I'm going to give you information, info. The info is about mindfulness. Info. Some of the info is basic. The basic info answers five questions. What is mindfulness? You already know, right? I practice mindfulness. You already know, I showed you.

At least in one formulation. How do you develop mindfulness? We just covered that too, okay? That was the first utterance, now wasn't it? What is mindfulness? I showed you the three sides, etc. Then there's the question of where is mindfulness? And there is the question of when is mindfulness.

When, meaning when did mindfulness develop? Well, the when of mindfulness is still developing and that's the utterance I just made, okay? With the shamanism, the meditation, the prehistory, the history, the present, and possible future. So that's the when, you already know that. The where you also know, it's the human condition.

So you already know the answers to these five basic questions. What is it? Concentration, clarity, equanimity, why practice it? Four sides of human happiness, how do you practice it? You need techniques, you need day-to-day practice, year-to-year practice, try to make it fun. When did it develop? Well, it's still developing.

And where is it applied? It's applied to the human condition. So that's the basic information. And then some of the information I'm going to give you is details. Detailed information. Details about the what. For each of concentration, clarity, and equanimity, the details are what it is, what it isn't, an example from your life, learning how to evoke examples from other people's lives.

There's a superficial view and a deep view for each of the skills. And you've heard me talk about that, if not at this retreat, at other retreats. So we've got detail about the what.

The detail about the why we talked about last night. Here are the basic formula. As you'll recall, mindful awareness leads to six factors that constitute, let's just say it's for you. This is the happy pointing to you. There's six things that are thought of as being, whoops, let's do it surface first. Surface or ordinary human happiness. And remember it was get pleasure in the body, avoid discomfort in the body, get various answers in the mind, avoid don't know mind in the mind, get situations that you want and avoid situations that you don't want. This ordinary happiness plus deep happiness for yourself. Deep happiness you remember the difference. Here you want fulfillment, here you want to elevate fulfillment, you want to avoid suffering.

You want to get the answer and you want to be able to experience don't know mind as an okay thing. And then here instead of situations it's behavior. You want to manifest a love cause and effect, positive behavior, cut down on negative objective behavior. Those are the objective factors, these are the sensory factors. This leads to a motivation to help other people.

And I mentioned why that is and what form that takes. So this is a love of the human condition. What I drew there, it was a heart and this is the Chinese character for humanity.

This is bodhicitta. This leads to bodhicitta in the Buddhist context which then leads you to spread surface and deep happiness to others. And all of this, this plus this and this equals total human happiness.

It's this plus this. It's not just learning how to get fulfillment, it's also getting pleasure. It's not just avoiding suffering, it's also avoiding discomfort. It's not just getting enlightenment answers, it's getting these two, these together, the situations you want.

So this plus this leading to this, leading to this. You'll be happy in every way. So that's details about happiness. Then there's, you already know all the details about the practice because it's on the game boards that we've been going over and over and over. That's where the details on that are. So I said you'd have basic information, you'd have detailed information.

You're going to also have deep information. There's certain deeper things. Something about the how. Remember that we talked about the deep game of mindfulness, the interplay of work with the parts, work with the whole, make distinctions, make unifications, active stance versus passive stance, the mutual complementarity of self and no self. That's sort of the deep game of how.

And then there's the deep where. We talked about this, I won't go into the details, but the forces that mold our sensory experience. The surface forces of inner activation versus outer, that expansive, contractive pull, the mundane expansion and contraction, and then the deep, pure spirit, spatial spread and collapse, or in the paradigm of early Buddhism, the spontaneous rising and simultaneous passing when viewed from a temporal paradigm. That's a deep view of where. That's our sensory experience.

That's the born in betweenness of time, space, and our sensory experience that inhabits it. So that's a deep perspective. I'm going to give you deep information. And then I'm going to give you broad information, just for the fun of it. A broad context of the whole universe. Going to look at where these themes sort of fit in with what's known about the natural world. So these are the kinds of information I'm going to give you. So we need a nice storage bin for this.

Hopefully one that sort of looks pretty, but also is intuitive so you'll know where information is. So we're going to have a basic box. No, let's not call it that. Let's call it the center square. Isn't that a place in Boston? Center square? Central square. Central square.

Sorry. We'll call this central square. And central square is going to store information about the what and the where and the when and the how.

All the basic stuff is in central square. Now the details about the what is mindfulness, we're going to store in three boxes over here. And the details about why practice it, we're going to store up here. And the details about how to practice it, we're going to store down over here. And then down here, we're going to make three yin-yang type shapes just because they're pretty.

But they'll also contain some information that's sort of interesting. So this then suggests that we could make a line here and a line here and a line here and a line here and make this into a nice little octagon. So the details are in the octagon. And the deep stuff is going to be in the second octagon. So we're going to draw a panel here.

That's going to store deep. Well, let's start with that. We're going to draw a panel here. This is going to store deep information, the deep game of how. This panel here is going to store deep information about the where. This panel here and this panel here and then these circles here are going to store broad information about the whole universe wherein we will see the themes of expansion and contraction played out. So that suggests that we could sort of do something like this, like this, like this. And we have a second nice little octagon.

And we've got this and then it's going to be like this, and this and this and this. So see the general pattern here? Your basic answers are here. Details here. Deep views here. And then we're going to see the whole arc of the physical world from galaxies to atoms.

This one here. So get the general idea of how we're going to store information. It looks like a mandala very much, doesn't it? In fact, mandalas have many levels of meaning. One of them is that they're actually a palace of a god that you're looking from a bird's eye view.

And so there's four gates. Yes, it's very much like a mandala. This is a cosmogram. It's a picture of the universe. It's a psychogram. It's a picture of consciousness.

It is a hodogram, a picture of the path. And it's an ideogram, I-D-I-O, not I-D-E-O. I-D-E-O, an ideogram in that sense is like a Chinese character.

I-D-I-O-gram, that means a, ideo means personal or private. It's a picture of my mind. It's an idiosyncratic psychogram.

What's the different part? I'm sorry? What's the different part? It's different from the rest of it. That's a joke. Oh, I see. Good.

I failed the koan. So now here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to show you the actual thing. I'm going to turn this board around, and you're going to see the giant thing. But I'm warning you that even though it's pretty big, you can't make out the details. Because all, by the way, all the information is stored in hieroglyphics, which you've seen all of them, OK, during these two weeks. But you can't see them from where you're sitting. But you will be able to see them from the sheet that I'm going to pass out to you. And then you'll be able to follow everything.

So I probably need some help twisting this around. Cool, huh? It's pretty, isn't it? Now, like I say, you can't see the symbols from where you are, even if you have good vision. I'm going to pass out something that you can look at.

But here it is. Here is your senses, right? Your conduct, how life treats you. And the answer to the question, what is mindfulness? Concentration, clarity, equanimity. Why practice mindfulness? Natural human happiness. What's involved? How do you practice mindfulness? Techniques? Daily cycle? Yearly cycle? Daily cycle? Have a good time.

What's the history of mindfulness? Shamanic, prehistoric shamanic origins? Historic meditative traditions? Present research? Possibly dawn of a new age? This is the basics. What, why, where, when? Now the details. Details on what. What is concentration? Well, I've given all the lectures.

I'm not going to go into it. But you know, there's what it is, what it isn't, instances, the deep view, and the taste, and the same information for sensory clarity, and the same information for equanimity. Details, notice it lines up one to one. Details about this you store here. Details about this, there's the noting board. There's the focus on positive board iconographically represented. Positive affect is smiling, positive behavior is legs, positive cognition is a brain.

Ideal or archetype is a holy figure. Positive situation is a dawn. I don't know, similar to this, but. And then this is other, and you could do it in the visual auditory somatic. We don't show the do nothing board because it's nothing. And this box tells you the four kinds of information you can extract from these boxes. There's strategies for formal practice. There are ways of classifying, cutting up the pie of sensory experience. There are ways of figuring out applications for certain jobs in the world.

How can I deal with this? How can I deal with that? You can formulate your strategies, that's your toolkit. And also it gives you a detailed view of the history. That's a sundial. You remember that we went through this whole thing and we outlined the whole history of

world contemplation based on these categories. So these are the four types of information you can extract from the game boards. So details about this, details about this.

What up here? Details about Mr. Happy Head. What's surface happiness? Avoiding pain, getting pleasure, avoiding pain. What's deep happiness? Reducing pleasure times mindfulness. And what's, instead of avoiding pain, you can experience pain divided by mindfulness, reducing suffering. What does the mind want? It wants to shine its light on all these different problems.

But what does it really want? To shine its light on the socket that it's connected to. What you think you want is to avoid don't know mind. But what you really want is to be able to experience don't know mind as an empowerment. What you think you want, which is valid, is good situations.

Sunny weather, not bad weather. But what you really want, because it leads to these things, is positive behavior. So if you get this for yourself, you're going to be very happy. You ask me, what's the definition of enlightenment? So this is a figure with a smiley face, but the outline is very diffuse.

There's no separation between inside and outside, no thinness to separate. And a consequence of that is that you want to serve. You want to serve materially.

You want to serve by, this is a mouth teaching mindfulness, mouth it, OK? You give dana, you support those that serve materially, and you support those who teach. So this gives you more information about this. Now let's go deep. This is deep, this is basics. Detail, detail, detail.

This is just for decoration. But it's sort of cool, because this reminds us that our sensory experience is a yin-yang thing. And we see that in detail over here. This reminds us that our path, our techniques, at a deep level arise through an interplay, maybe not exactly yin-yang, but there's a little expansive contractive. So this reminds us of the deep view over here. This is practice, this is the deep view of practice.

The interplay of active versus passive. Work with the parts, work with the whole. Make discriminations, break discriminations. Manifest a self, go into the no self. So this is the sort of the yin-yang, the inner game of practice is here. And the sort of yin-yang of sensory experience, the basic molding forces, the tug of subjective versus objective activation, the surface manifestations of expansion and contraction, the deep manifestations of expansion and contraction, and the effortless activity of time itself, rising and passing simultaneously, these are the forces, superficial and deep, that mold sensory experience. So this is the doorway to the deep view on this. This is the doorway to the deep view on this.

And this is the doorway to the deep view on the universe, displayed here. The title of the universe is Omega, which is related to the cosmological constant. It's the number, it's the interplay of expansion and contraction that molds the universe as a whole.

And the universe is, at the finest scale, the smallest spatial scale, is the Planck. And then this thing with the dot, this circumpunk, represents all the structures that arise in between the universe as a whole and the Planck scale, the cosmic space scale and the Planck spatial scale. There's all these structures that sort of seem to reflect a contractive core and an expansive cloud or something along those lines. And what are they? Galaxies, supermassive black hole. In the center, effusive cloud of stars. Suns, we talked about it, born in between the expansion of thermal photon pressure and the contraction of self-gravity. Planets, core-mantle atmosphere interactions cause the in and out of the core and mantle cause the surface continents to flow.

The rising and falling of thermal currents cause the weather to flow. The human being, anatomically, it's got nerves that input. There's process in the brain.

Motor goes out. The heart and the capillaries, it's an expansive contraction thing. We have a similar kind of structure. And in our complicated, of all creatures, we are the ones that are most aware of the input output in terms of cause and effect.

And so we live very much in that world also. The cell, I gave a whole talk about how the cell is formed by a lipid bilayer with polar ends sticking out into the watery environment on the outside and the watery environment on the inside, creating an inside-outside situation. Then macromolecules like proteins with nonpolar core and surrounded by polar radicals.

And so what do those polar radicals do? Well, they can migrate into this membrane and start to create very complex interactions that are input output of energy and matter and information into the cell. That same sort of deal. Contractive core surrounded by this halo and then atoms look very much in some ways like galaxies. And at the base of it is the mathematics. The operations of mathematics, which all have the same basic structure, just different flavor. It's an intertwining of three kinds of polarizing and canceling activities. You have step forward, step back, don't move. You have stretch out, pull in, don't move.

You have whirl this way, whirl that way, don't move. All the movements of the dancer are represented by the mathematics and therefore the fact that the mathematics seems to have this polarization cancellation type of situation shouldn't surprise us because we've discovered it in our own sensory experience seems to be something very fundamental about the way that, so it's sort of at the base of what models all of this. There was a famous bio mathematician named Haldane, H-A-L-D-A-N-E as an Englishman.

And this was back in I guess the Victorian or Edwardian period, maybe not quite that old, but back there, early 19th century, he was active. Someone once asked him, based on his study of mathematics and biology, had he been able to discern any characteristics of the creator? Could he say anything about God's personality based on his development of this field of bio mathematics? And he said, yes. As far as I can see, the main characteristic of God is that he has an inordinate fondness for beetles. But actually, I would paraphrase Haldane, I think God has an inordinate fondness for contrast and cancellation. That seems to be the pattern that we see very broadly. And that is everything important that I know. Thank you. And now, you know it.



## Penetrating Sleepiness ~ Shinzen Young

For the sleepiness stuff, well, read and reread until you master completely what I have to say in the blog from fuzz to buzz. That's on the internet and that's the brain dump of everything that I know for how to work with syncing. So syncing is the generic term for anything from getting a little hazy in your consciousness to the zemlurge and the, you know, the snoring in the zendo and so forth.

That whole continuum we call syncing. Konjin in Japanese means, kon means dark and jin means to like sink down to the bottom of the pond. So konjin is like sinking in English. So for syncing over and over again, straighten the spine, over and over again, force the eyes open, over and over again, enjoy the pleasant restfulness of the waves of sleepiness, over and over again, equanimize the discomfort of the sleepiness. And you just keep doing that and doing that and doing that. And I know it's hard to believe and I certainly didn't believe it, but you can eventually penetrate the sensory event of sleepiness. And when you do that, then that's a sensory experience and there's the objective circumstance of, you know, you're wilting, you're lurching and you're breathing heavily, etc. When you penetrate the sensory event of sleepiness, then the objective aspects of the sleepiness, the loss of consciousness, the impact on the posture and the fact that you start to make noise, that all gets cleared up.

I remember one of my early retreats in Japan, of course, I was dominated by the pain of the sitting and I went to talk to the person that was like leading the retreat and he said, I've been meditating, this is him talking, I've been meditating now for 25 years and, you know, eventually the pain breaks up. But then he said sleepiness is very hard to deal with. The pain is going to break up, but sleepiness may continue to be a challenge. Well, now that conversation took place 40 years ago and I can tell you that the sleepiness breaks up too. Just keep working and working and working and you'll see improvements in that regard.

## Pick Your Medicine (for Enlightenment) ~ Shinzen Young

We were talking yesterday about how much I like this springy icon because it shows what we sit on always or where our feet are planted always whether we're aware of it or not, which is the spring of the air, the vibrancy of emptiness. To experience that in our inner and outer see, hear, feel and to ride on that in how we express ourselves in body motion, speech, and the voluntary parts of the thinking process, our triple karma, so to speak, our actions, our motor circuits, to experience the flow of emptiness in our sensory circuits and to express that very same spirit in the bounciness and spontaneity of our motor circuits. This is the paradigm that I like to use for how this path works. I mentioned that around the world there are numerous ways and throughout history numerous fundamental ways have been discovered to come to this. You can deconstruct things through careful observation.

I like that because I can turn it into a systematic algorithm that loops and branches. There's in theory the possibility of nurture positive as a path to that, particularly as it's done in the Vajrayana traditions, the deity yoga, where you eventually learn how to manifest the deities from the void. At the end of the period of the deity yoga, the period of the deity yoga is called the cherim, which means the stages of generation. Then that's followed by dzogren, where it's all dissolved back into the emptiness. Often they will use special physiological yogic practices to facilitate getting the emptiness down into the cellular level of one's being, like the six dharmas of Naropa and so forth, if you're interested.

Versions of nurture positive can achieve this, at least in theory. There's the whole, okay, do nothing approach, just call off the search. Then there's the sort of be conscious of consciousness, self-inquiry, shine the light back on itself, who am I, what am I kinds of approaches.

I think those are sort of the four main, highly contrasting strategies that we find around the world. I encourage people to do what works. Different things work for different people at different times. I'm a little bit averse to people that claim there's only one way that is stunningly better for all human beings, that has just not been my experience. Different things seem to work for different people at different times.

So pick your medicine. And hopefully, if you keep with it, it will gradually converge or maybe suddenly converge to this kind of bouncy experience of, you can call it liberation, you can call it unification, you can call it annihilation, or you can call it creation. It's my version of creationism, okay.

My version of creationism is that you see how consciousness creates the inner and outer world moment by moment and you participate in that. So form is emptiness, that's sort of the first part of the process. And then emptiness is form, is another theme that presents itself as you begin to be able to sort of enjoy seeing the world manifest and the self manifest moment by moment, continuous creation. Bri'ah yesh me'ayin in the Hebrew, the Bri'ah, the creation, yesh means both self and thing, the creation of self and thing, met from ayin, the divine nothingness. So I left off by saying that in the Jewish mystical tradition, the ability to do that is related to an important theme called tikkun olam, the mending of the world, which of course is none other than the bodhisattva service. So if you've watched a festival, then you would in no way wrong to be over on that. I mix with it a bit and people would comment that you know what, I communities with an overdone Irish people, and you found that you're misbehaving, misbehaving, but still doing misbehaving, from what I know from prison as well, there normally won't be gang relations, but missing one member, the priest of the church from Pas JJ, they were like. .

# Practical Game Plan of Shinzens Techniques & Strategies

~Shinzen Young

Well, now this is really interesting because this, to me, this is the modern upaya. We're reaching out to people. Now what I decided to do was, okay, if we're flying under the banner of an attentional skill set, well, we want them to apply these skills in a way that they're going to dramatically grow. So I outlined this in the What is Mindfulness, what this whole strategy is. So the categories of the basic mindfulness system are designed to produce insights right off the bat. So that it's not just that they're going to get a little bit of concentration kind of thing, but they're explicitly developing concentration, sensory clarity, equanimity, and they're learning how to parse their sensory experience in such a way that the fundamental insights can arise without us trying to get them to believe a certain thing. So we're going to provide you with an attentional skill set, we're going to provide you with a way of analyzing your sensory experience, which is, it's not any doctrine or belief system, it's obviously is the case that we see and we hear and we feel. And then people can hopefully start to have really significant experiences. So that to me is a modern and incredible opportunity for upaya.

## PROS & CONS of DHARMA MAPS ~ Shinzen Young

So, the topic was the pros and cons of Dharma maps. Maps that sort of map out, okay, here is the state. I think you were mostly thinking of stages. It's like you go through these stages and this is what happens and then this happens and this happens. So, there are all these maps.

So, what's the pros and cons in general of having these maps and what's the pros and cons of this map versus that map kind of thing. I'm assuming that's... The one I like is Mahasi's. Yes. The progress of insight. And I was afraid of that because that was what I would have gone to the Wikipedia and come all prepared to make comparisons and contrasts, but then again I would have missed my body work. So, maybe I'll have time tomorrow. There's 16 of them, right? 16 stages, I think.

And I have a vague recollection, but I'm not going to pontificate based on that vague recollection. I have a map in my computer. Yes. I also have to think about it. Okay, but I can probably say a few things broadly on this issue.

Many years ago, the Kuroda Institute, which is an academic Buddhist study institute associated with the Zen Center of LA, had an entire seminar where they invited Buddhist scholars to present papers on stages and maps throughout the Buddhist world. And I tried to find it online. I couldn't.

I think it would be really cool if anybody wants to see if that was ever published or is available someplace or other similar scholarly collections where this issue is discussed in its full breadth and depth. I would, but I've got body work with Diane. Say what? I've got body work with Diane. I think you made the right decision. The map is not the journey. So you decided to make the journey.

So this is good. Now, Buddhism broadly is three vehicles. And then within that, there's a gazillion other divisions. It's 2,500 years and half the world and now the whole world. And Buddhism is just a subset of world mysticism anyway.

So broadly, if we're going to talk about maps and that kind of thing, we really should frame Buddhism within the larger context of world contemplative practice. So it's a huge and very rich question that you bring up. So let me just start blabbering and we'll see what comes up. First, I'd like to share my own experience.

Well, actually not. Before we do that, so three vehicles, numerous subdivisions, and that's just a subset of what's worldwide. So within Buddhism, what do we have? Well, let's see. We have the ten observing pictures. That's my most popular YouTube presentation, which tells you that people are really in the stages and what have you. And that's used in Zen.

But see, here's the deal. There's different versions of the ten. There's one that has eight.

So this already tells us that it's not exactly constrained to exactly ten. What else is there? Well, there's the one that I frequently use myself, which is the four classes of noble individuals, the four Aryabhugala. These are maps for a lifetime of practice.

This is really big picture stuff. Sota, Apana, Sakadagami, Anagami, Araha. So that's stream enterer, once returner, non-returner, and worthy, if I were to translate these into English. Over a lifetime of practice or in traditional belief, over lifetimes of practice, you pass through these four stages. But then there's the stages of insight, which are like 16 stages that precede stream entry, I believe. So it's like, oh, it's all this fine subdivision.

And then there's the four jhanas, the eight jhanas, the nine jhanas, which are not exactly paths to enlightenment, but they're definitely demarcations and are related. So the Chinese have their ox-herding pictures. The Tibetans have their elephant-herding pictures. And there are various stages. And some of those elephant-herding pictures look an awful lot like some of the versions of the ox-herding pictures. And since, once again, remember that Eastern Tibet and Western China are the same place, so we're not surprised that there would be interactions there, even though the political concerns of those two cultures don't like to, well, they definitely both have axes to grind with regards to history.

And that can sort of get in the way. What else is there? Well, there are the ten bodhisattva stages. And then there are Tozan's five degrees, and I'm pretty sure there's a five-stage, one five-stage model that's prominent in the Kargyu lineage. I could be wrong about this. You get the general idea here. There's a lot. So now I'll tell you my own story. I started out not as a Buddhist practitioner, but as a Buddhist scholar. And actually, I'm very glad that I had that academic background and that training. And it was serious graduate-level training that involved mastering a half-dozen languages of Asia and reading these things in the original languages, etc., etc.

So I'm glad I had that background. But in some ways, well, I remember when I was in the Zen temple in Japan when I started, one of the senior monks there said, because I could really impress them, I mean, I knew classical Chinese and Sanskrit. He said, someday all your learning will be very useful. Someday in the distant future, when you're in a position to teach, it's going to be really, really good that you know all this stuff academically. But right now, it's like totally getting in the way of your practice.

And he was totally right. So what happened to me was I spent, I would say, at least 15 years, the first 15 years of my practice, torturing myself with regards to where am I at on these maps. Have I experienced this yet? And then it was actually like literally torture. It was like if I read some classic thing, it's like, oh my God, there's a stage I haven't heard of even.

What to say of achieved? I never even heard of this one. Well, that's another one to put on the list of I'll never be anywhere until I experience X, Y, and Z. And I mean, it was horrible. It was like for me, because there was so much grasping around the notion of I got to get somewhere and I got to get these signs and there's all of these things to do.

Well, fortunately, eventually I grew up and grew out of that. But that is one of the dangers of having these maps. Okay, we're going to talk about pros and cons. I'm certainly going to talk about pros, but there's certain cons. One of them is that you get very concerned with rating. And of course that just links into the whole thing that when did it start? The sixth grade, kindergarten, certainly by middle school, by high school, it's all about mate and rate, right? So it's status.

And so it links into all of that stuff, et cetera, et cetera. The other possible con about these maps is what I was talking about, which I briefly alluded to, which is putting an inordinate amount of time and energy and emotional investment in the maps or the quest, the map quest, the quest for the right map. Time and energy that is therefore not devoted to practice. So if you go on the internet, most Buddhist time and energy on the internet is being spent in contention about who's got the right map. You don't know whether to laugh or cry because there's people that are interested in making the journey are not interested by and large in debating about who's got the right map by and large because there's only so much time and energy. And the trap is, well, I don't want to start to make the journey until I'm sure that this is the very best, right? Because I don't want to be like not doing the very best.

And then what happens is that years pass and people just study and argue and study and argue and study and argue. So what I find useful, although I know to say this is offensive and confusing perhaps, but I myself take great comfort in the notion which I alluded to briefly and has already annoyed people, the notion that actually none of these maps really

work very well by my standards of what I would call work very well, meaning that I know enough based on my own personal experience as a professional meditation teacher and as a pretty good dilettante scientist, I know enough to know that we can do a lot better with regards to making enlightenment available to great masses of people. By we I mean humanity and I mean in the next few centuries. It will take a combination of three things, deep practice, a scientific mentality, and out-of-the-box creativity. But there will be people, probably dozens, maybe hundreds of people in the future that bring these three things together.

And it seems to me not unreasonable that they will come up with things that change the course of human history, that dramatically change the course of human history. All of the maps and methodologies that we now have essentially are based on one approach, which is introspection. An individual looks within, discovers certain things, and creates a formulation based on that. Often based in part on what they've learned from the past, usually taking some parts of that, rebelling against other parts, and often creating something new that wasn't there before. Some combination of accepting the past, rebelling against the past, and innovation. Then a new model, a new path arises, but it's still based on an individual's introspection.

And it's pretty good. When I say they're all relatively ineffective, I just mean that it takes a very long time. And most people are not, most human beings are just not willing to put the time and energy like you and I are into this path. So what is lacking is an objective view of what's going on, a view based on hard science and evidence. What is also lacking is true collaborative dialogue among the masters, and among the masters and their students. The great, right now the great masters, most of them are old fashioned, old Asians, with whom which you cannot communicate in an open peer to peer kind of dialogue. They won't do it with you as a student, it's just not on their cultural radar.

And they won't do it among each other either, because there's just too much at stake. So they're not like scientists. In science, there could be a Nobel laureate up there, talking about something, and I could be a graduate student. And I could get up and I could say you're wrong because of this, this, this and this. And if I'm right, if I've got evidence to back it up, then that's it. It's over. Even though I'm just a no one that no one's ever heard of, and this guy's got a Nobel Prize, he was wrong.

I pointed out something. That kind of thing, that doesn't happen in the context of meditation teaching. But I think it will as things become more modern and more Western. You start to have really frank dialoguing among the masters and among the masters and their students. So the combination of turning the lens of science towards it, plus really being willing to discuss things, specifically to look at each other's maps and discuss in an open way, what's this, what's this. No, I don't quite think it works that way, etc.

etc. That will probably happen in the future. Now, of course, when I say that in general they don't work well based on what I think will eventually replace them in the future, don't get me wrong. Relative to not using these maps, relative to not doing this practice, well, forget about that. The alternative to what we now have is horrific. The alternative to not doing it. So, you know, it's good that we have this.

I just think we can, we meaning humanity, can potentially do a lot better. So, okay, so what should we think about, what should we, how should we think about these maps? Well, I pointed out some of the cons. Let's talk about some of the pros. They can give you an idea of where to go, what to look for. They can give you an idea of what's optimal to do when various things occur. That's really useful. They can motivate you. It's like, well, why do it if there's not goodies at the end? Or in the middle? Or even maybe in the beginning? So, you can be motivated by this and you can be informed by it so you know what to look for.

So that's good. They are based, at least in part, on real people's real experience. And those are by and large real people with very, very deep experience. So, people with very, very

deep experience, that's something we need to pay attention to. However, it is also important to realize that not everything that appears in those maps is necessarily a deep person's deep experience.

Because other factors enter into the creation of these things. What are some other factors? Well, some master a thousand years ago might have said some things to a student. But they didn't write it down. When that student wrote it down, well, that student's ideas are there mixed with that master's ideas.

Perhaps there's speculations. So you cannot be sure that you're getting the ipsit-dixit, the very words that were said. Furthermore, these things were usually written by hand, not printed. Printing is... well, Chinese had printing a long time ago, but they were written by hand, so you get scribal error. So if you start to get all fundamentalist about exactly what's there, you know, it must be exactly that way.

Well, it just might be some scribal error. Also, because of the authoritarian nature of these cultures, there's a need to make your innovations appear to agree with scripture. So there can be a forcing, where it's like forced onto a certain model that has been passed down. All of these, therefore, give us our caveats, not to get fundamentalist about what's literally there. On the other hand, as I said, by and large, these are important experiences of deep masters. And so there's really something to learn. The Buddha said that there are three epistemological bases. Epistemology means the investigation of how we know, how we gain valid knowledge.

So in ancient Greece it was the same, in ancient India it was the same. There's three bases. Direct experience, logical inference, and reliable authority. Now, the Buddha rejected reliable authority. He said base yourself on direct experience and on logical inference. But the fact is, maybe the fact is that consulting with an expert is a good idea. But there's a difference between consulting with an expert and reading something that was written, hopefully, by an expert a thousand years ago, but may have other things that have entered in there. Because when you consult with an authority, you can dialogue. But when you've got a text that has come down to you, you can't dialogue with the person that wrote that text. So the good news is that there's probably stuff in there that is hugely valuable. The other news is, though, that we can't, we can only, it's a very one-sided communication.

It's not like when you hire a consultant and you say, you know, this person knows what they're talking about, so let's see what their opinion is and then you can ask questions, etc. So those are some of the pros and cons of having these maps. I myself don't have a map. I don't say that you'll pass through certain stages and delineate what those stages are. But I do give you some general trends. I say that over time you're going to notice an elevation in your concentration, clarity and equanimity. And that's going to have some pretty dramatic effects on your life. So I like to talk more along those lines. Yet inevitably we want to know that we're making progress in some way or another. So I will give you four criteria that you can use to judge your progress. Starting with the least, what would I say? Starting with, each of these criteria is valid, but there's a hierarchy of maturity. I'm going to end with the most mature. So that means I'm going to begin with the least mature, but you don't have to take that as a put-down. The least mature criteria is, during periods of practice I have experiences that are unusual, interesting, fun, entertaining, and so forth. An awful lot of people, for an awful lot of people that is the criteria.

If you want to sell spirituality, you sell entertainment. But I'm not saying that that's completely without validity. Because if fun and interesting and unusual things happen, then that's going to motivate you to keep practicing.

So from that perspective, that's fine. The only problem is, I don't care who you are or who your teacher is or what you're doing, it ain't going to always be fun and interesting and entertaining and have unusual things happen. So then when it's the opposite of all those, if you hold out these criteria of fun, interesting, unusual, entertaining, then when the opposite

of those happen for a period of time, which could be perhaps a long period of time, then it's to hell with meditation.

You don't want to do it anymore. So, that's one criteria, because have fun if you can. A little bit more mature is during a formal period of practice, you can actually taste mindfulness. You can taste concentration, clarity, and equanimity right while you're doing the practice. And each one of them has its own taste, its distinctive reward taste. And it's a mature palate. You learn how to taste that. There's just a taste of being concentrated. And as Mike Chixentli Hai pointed out, that's an intrinsic reward just to being concentrated.

Doesn't matter what you're concentrated on, independent of the particular focus. Hence, you could be doing a god awful boring task, like licking stamps or the archetypal nun task is stepping out communion wafers, okay? You know, like hours and hours every day just making these communion wafers. Okay, now, I would suggest to you that that is either heaven or hell, depending on how recollected you are. Recollected is the Catholic word for Samadhi. So, if you're tasting, like Shelley, some of you know Shelley Young. So, before she became a really impressive psychotherapist back when we were kids, she used to do temp jobs.

And it was literally like licking envelopes, right? Putting stamps on it, whatever. So, she'd go to these temp jobs and there would be other temp workers doing this. And as the day progressed, you could see their moods deteriorate, okay? They were just like, by the end of the day, they were just like, you know, not doing a very good thing. But she would just get higher and higher and higher, right? Because it was Samud, it was Karma Yoga, it was a tasted concentration, Samadhi, the rest of it, the taste of Samadhi was there all day.

So, I mean, she left and she was just like, you know, she's doing this shit job, pardon my French. But the more shit job it is, the actually easier it is to meditate, in that sense, right? The simpler. So, you know, with that taste of concentration. So, and the clarity has its own taste and the equanimity is the taste of release and catharsis of purification. So, yes, if you can actually taste those things while you're doing formal practice, then, yeah, that's good, that's a sign of progress.

But what about when you can't taste those things? Because that's going to happen. Why? You can go for years with very deep states of mindfulness, but then either something happens in the external world that's pretty challenging or nothing's happening in the external world, but it's just time for the next layer of stored material to release. And suddenly it seems as though you're back to square one. You can't focus, it's just like everything is surface, it's like I never meditated before. Now, you're not really back to square one, the clock is not pointing to where you started, okay? Many days have passed, okay? It's not the same day, even though it seems like the clock is still pointing to, you know, twelve o'clock or what have you. But it seems that way.

So, you're not going to have those reward flavors. So, then what? Well, if that's all that you use to judge your practice with, then you're not going to be meditating. So, what's the next mature, more mature criterion is not now linked to what I experienced during formal practice. It's linked to the long-term effects of the practice in daily life. It's possible you might not have anything unusual or entertaining during the practice. It's possible that you might not even taste concentration, clarity or equanimity individually or collectively. But you notice there's a trend in daily life as you're sort of popping around in the world with regards to five things. One or a combination of the following five. Less suffering, more fulfillment, insights, understandings about things that sort of happen, either personal or transpersonal, improvements in your behavior and a kind of sense of love and service for humanity, a disappearing of that fundamental alienation that separates inside and outside. And along with that, a sense of a larger identity that it is your privilege to serve. If in one or a combination of these, it can just be one, often it's reduced suffering.



It's not necessarily the whole list. But if in any of these areas you're noticing improvements and it seems to be linked to the practice, then we say that you're making progress and the practice is working. The most mature criteria is to just do the practice and not really, you just do the practice, you do the practice and you're not really thinking that much about the goals. As Maezumi once said, when asked directly, what is satori? What is enlightenment? He said, satori to satori de nai to no kubetsu ga naku naru koto deshō. I think you could say that satori, enlightenment, is the passing away of the distinction between enlightenment and non-enlightenment, which is a very empowering statement in a lot of different ways. So you might say that how far away are you from enlightenment would be measured in exactly how much you identify with the moment by moment arising of the conviction, I'm not enlightened and I won't be. So the length of time between where you're at now and enlightenment is no longer than the length of that thought, I'm not enlightened, depending on your relationship to that thought each time it comes up. So, very fast path to enlightenment, have a complete experience of the belief that you're not enlightened. Now you understand a complete experience, I described a complete experience. Complete experience is a paradoxical experience.

It's infinitely full and absolutely vacuous at the same time. Okay, so, here's a, let's see, I wrote down, I did actually write down a couple of things. Okay. What does that say? Okay.

It's in Chinese. Okay, so here are some common beliefs about the maps that people have and that don't agree with my experience. I just say it that way. One very common belief is that there's this thing called enlightenment and before it happens to you, you're messed up and after it happens to you, everything is perfect. Now, you know, when we say it that way, we sort of like laugh and well, no one's that naive, but actually this notion is deep down in people, okay, because I see it. It's like, even though we say that like, even if we use the Theravada model, okay, and we say enlightenment is stream entry, what is, well, there's like three more steps, right? And although it may seem from pututjana to ariya, to a stream, to a sotapanna. Pututjana means you're not there yet, okay, means, literally means an ordinary person, okay, pututjana. So from pututjana to sotapanna seems very far, I know, but sotapanna to araha, that distance, that's really far, okay.

Stream enters all over the place, all over the place. Arahās, I mean, I've met a few that probably were or could have been if they wanted to be, Sasaki Roshi could be if he wanted to be, I'm not sure he wants to be an araha. Well, you say, well, wait, that doesn't make any sense. But when you're that enlightened, the difference between enlightenment and non-enlightenment goes away, okay. So we can't really fathom the decisions of people like that. You look at the classical path and you see the descriptions of what arahas are supposed to be like, well, Sasaki Roshi's not that way, okay, but you sense he could be that way if he wanted to. He just doesn't want to sever the connection to humanity. That's called the bodhisattva. I mean, the ones that I've met from Southeast Asia, like Thamphu Luseda, you can find him on the internet, okay. You can actually get videos of the Thamphu Luseda.

He was a reputed araha. 20, 30 years ago, how long ago, I don't remember. Remember, some of you can remember when I was downtown at CMC in Koreatown, at my own center there. Yeah, Charlie, Judy, go back that far. You remember? Yeah, you do remember. I remember picking you guys up at the station downtown. I remember learning to meditate with that ice cream truck, too.

Oh, yeah. The ice cream truck and the schizophrenic derelicts and the mariachi on one side and the Sino-Vietnamese opera on the other side. To say nothing of the gunshots and the turf wars of the drug dealers fighting on the front lawn.

We're killing you, Arahā! And we're actually there meditating. Yeah, that was, that's the center I used to have. It was like amazing. New Year's? Ah! New Year's in El Barrio. It's the Battle of the Bulge. Guns everywhere.

I mean, automatic weapons. So, you know this thing of sitting, sitting until midnight? It's so tame now. You know, it's really like very anti-climactic for me.

Like, last night, was it last night? The night before, whatever. You know, hit the bell here, I heard maybe a firework somewhere. You don't even hear people go, ah! You know, because we're just too far away from things. But when we were down at the community meditation center downtown, we did the thing. I've been doing the sit, you know, the chant, the om mani padme, and then we ring the bell exactly at midnight.

I've been doing that for like 40 years or something. Well, down there, it would start like maybe a minute before you know the bell was going to ring because, okay, because the gunshots would start. And then it would just reach this crescendo.

It would end on all sides. And you could actually see the tracer bullets going out, okay, out the window. I think it's illegal now, right? To shoot off guns.

I thought it was illegal then. And so then you hit the bell, right? And then there would just be this firestorm of rounds going off in all directions. But anyway, back in those days, which had their charm, but I'm sure glad we grew out of that. But back in those days, when I give classes, there would be four or five people. It was a pretty small operation.

So one of my residents, just before, I used to do this thing on Monday where people would come. So one of my residents calls me up and he says, Taunpulu Sayadaw. Sayadaw is like the Burmese equivalent of Roshi, okay? Taunpulu, T-A-U-N-G-P-U-L-U. Taunpulu Sayadaw is in town. He's at the Burmese temple.

And he says he's willing to come over and talk to your group tonight. You know, this is like that joke about Jesus shows up in the parish church. I mean, it's like, oh my God, okay? Because this guy was a reputed arhat. He was old. He had not gone horizontal for 30 years. Every night, yaza, for the last three decades.

Okay. They carried him around in a palanquin kind of thing. And he came. He came to my little center in Koreatown. He didn't speak any English. He had translators. And he did not look like any human being that I ever saw. I mean, in terms of his body language or whatever. Like I say, look him up on the internet, okay? It's like death walking. It's like dead man walking, okay? It was like, imagine a human made out of rubber that you could just like pull on any part of the anatomy and it would just like stretch.

There's just nothing there to resist. Okay. So yeah, this guy was probably an arhat, okay? But you know, hey, I can do one yaza.

But like eternal yaza? That's a whole other deal. Okay. So anyway. So first of all, what I call enlightenment is stream entry. And that's doable by you folks. I mean, that's like, you know, that's the stated goal of my program. So, you know, you think that people have this idea, oh, I'm going to get enlightenment and then everything's going to be okay. Well, the distance between having seen no self for good and full purification of consciousness, that is a huge distance. But no matter how much you tell people that, you get these weird things that they expect senior masters to somehow be perfect, okay? Or people that are enlightened at a stream entrance level, then people get all weirded out when they're screwed up in certain ways. Even though we say, you know, hey, working this whole thing out, it takes a lifetime, okay? Enlightenment in the sense of stream entry is just the beginning. But however many times you say that, people that are enlightened at some level, when they screw up, people seem to be surprised for some reason. It's like, well, they're enlightened, how could they do this and do that? Enlightenment just means that you've seen no self for good forever. But it doesn't mean you've worked out all your bad habits by any means.

That's what those three other stages are. So this notion either expressed or implied or somewhere in the subconscious that because someone has a deep practice, even a practice so deep that they have abided permanent oneness and nothingness, the notion that, oh, well, everything's perfect and they never suffer about anything and they never make mistakes, it doesn't work that way. And besides, even if you become an arhat, that's great, but that's not a Buddha. What's the difference between a Buddha and an arhat? The Buddhist tradition has asked that question, okay? The Buddha is a special kind of arhat.

So what's different about the Buddha if an arhat is fully enlightened, has impeccable behavior and never suffers? So then what's the difference between that and a Buddha? The Buddhist scholastic tradition says, and I think it's a very good answer, the difference is that a Buddha is a creative arhat. A Buddha comes up with something that no one discovered before, number one. And number two, it is of sufficient power and relevance that it changes human history. So from that perspective, there's only been one Buddha so far that we know of historically, 2,500 years ago, that has had that big an impact on the world being enlightened.

But I think we're due for the next one, okay? But the next one may not be a person, maybe a team of enlightened, scientifically oriented, out-of-the-box thinkers, maybe a different one, with the technology as it will exist. Okay, so, this notion of... So I can see why some teachers avoid the e-word, because people have this idea that it's like, oh, you're screwed up, then you're enlightened, and everything's perfect. The other notion that people seem to have is that enlightenment happens suddenly. It can. But in my experience, not necessarily. I see that in a lot of cases, it just sort of comes on, okay? And you're acclimatized to it, you may not really quite realize that you actually have become enlightened, because it wasn't sudden and dramatic. So, there's that point.

Can it happen suddenly and dramatically? Sure. But I don't particularly aim at that. However, some teachers do.

They aim at getting you to have this sudden epiphany kind of thing. And if they have a track record in producing those results, then that's a good teacher, okay? When I look at teachers, I don't look at, say, oh, this one has this map that I agree with, and this one has this other map that I don't agree with, but this person says it's similar to what I say, so, you know, they're right, or something. I don't think that way about teachers.

I think about track record. Someone could have a completely different perspective than I do. But if they've got a track record in leading people to significant transformation, I'd rather have you study with that person than someone that, like, agrees with my methodology but doesn't have a track record.

So, anyway, be that as it may. Another thing that notion that people seem to have is, not fairly recently, is that everyone has to go through these dark night experiences before they get enlightened. Dark night experiences are sort of emptiness and no self and it's a bad trip kind of thing. Fear and depression and hopelessness and disorientation, etc., etc.

And it's horrible and you just have to white knuckle through it. That everyone has to go through these. That's not been my experience at all. Now, everyone has to go through some fear and some depression and some disorientation, but not necessarily this sort of paralytic thing that can last for months or years that some people do go through.

Don't worry, you probably won't. One last thing is the notion that the map is linear. That there's this step and this step and this step and this step. Because when you act... That doesn't agree with my experience. When you actually talk to people that use that and you say, well, is it like literally that or do you revisit certain steps and does it loop around, etc., etc., they'll say, oh, well, yeah, actually you do go through these things cyclically over and over again, which does agree with my experience. But the way it's presented, it's not presented that way. It's presented like there's just this linear progression. So that's why I

don't have a linear map. What do I have? I have a looping and branching algorithm. And I think that a lot of the linear maps, when you really ask what really happens, are looping and branching algorithms. So that impression, I can promise you that topologically, a series of points with links is not at all the same as a net. Those are mathematically completely different critters. A sequence with arrows that only point in one direction is not at all even remotely like a directed cyclic graph.

So if it's really a looping and branching algorithm, then we shouldn't be calling it a linear map. So I set the thing up so that you do certain procedures and certain things happen. Some of the things that happen will be walls. You'll hit the wall, there'll be a challenge.

And then there's something optimal to do for that challenge. Some of the things that happen will be windows. There'll be windows of opportunity. And there's something optimal to do. And the whole thing is just loops and branches and loops and branches, optimizing your experience as the months and years go on. And that's sort of the view that I like to take.

Now, having said that, I don't have a map, etc., etc. I have to be honest, it is also true that there are certain broad trends. But it's not like everyone goes through these trends. There is a trend over time for the themes of flow and impermanence and so forth to become prominent in your practice. But that doesn't mean that if that's not the case, that your practice isn't working. But I openly talk about flow and so forth because I think it's useful to know about it and to work with it and so forth. So, yes, there is a tendency as time goes on for many people for that to become more and more prominent part of your meditation landscape.

But as I say, that's not necessarily the case for everyone. So how will you know if you're making progress? Well, I give you four ways of judging if you're making progress. It is also practically useful to touch base with at least one competent coach at least every once in a while to talk about your practice, to dialogue, to see, okay, what's working, what may not be working, get suggestions and so forth. So I think that's all that came to my mind tonight in talking about maps.

Is that okay? It's something. I think in the future when the kind of really open dialogue that I envisage takes place and when evidence, objective evidence, all of the scientific method is brought into this whole thing that I would make a conjecture that maybe in a hundred years or two hundred years there will only be one universal model. But it will probably be a very complex model because it would have to cover all the individual variations of individual human beings. But I suspect that we'll someday have a true science of enlightenment.

And I can't say for sure, right, but it's what my gut tells me. We'll either survive or we won't. And if we do survive, I think the future will be very bright. It's our honor and privilege to be the early adopters.

## RETROACTIVE MEDITATION ~Shinzen Young

Okay, well, sometimes people ask, okay, when I do intellectual work, I can't meditate, because I've got to do the intellectual work. Or is there a way I can meditate, etc.? I'll just share my experience. I think different people will have different experiences, but my experience is that when I do intellectual work, when I do writing, or I'm trying to figure stuff out, I can't implement any kind of formal technique. But what I can do is I can pepper that experience with little moments of practice in life. So what that involves is what I call stop on a dime, okay? It's like, okay, I'm doing this, I'm doing this, I've been doing this for an hour, and I really like to keep doing this, but...

Stop on a dime. Now what's going to happen? Well, maybe everything will be peaceful and formless after 50 years of practice. Just kidding. But probably there will be a Vesuvius called the eruption of past and future. And that will erupt in the seeing, hearing, feeling, probably. So you implement a technique, even if it's only for 30 seconds.

You open up completely to that. In those 30 seconds, if you bring the totality of your intentionality to do a quality period of practice with whatever erupts, then you can actually do retroactive meditation. Now retroactive meditation is by definition oxymoronic, isn't it? Because it's meditation, mindfulness particularly, is always in the moment, right? How can you possibly retroactively be mindful? But you see, while you were bopping around doing this, doing that, doing this, doing that, all those energies were getting agitated, activated. When you stop on a dime, you only have a couple minutes. But if you really bring your triple A game during those couple minutes, everything that got stirred up in that hour or two hours of just ordinary unconscious frenetic activity, it's right there in those couple minutes. And if you can have a complete experience of that, it effectively has the same effect on your overall growth pattern as having meditated for those two hours. You do it retroactively, but you have to really bring your A game to whatever got stimulated. So when I do things that I just have to do things, where I can't keep a technique going during the thing because I'm just doing the thing, then I pepper it with this stop on a dime, start on a dime.

So stop on a dime is you stop the activity, no matter how much you want to keep doing it, okay? The mindfulness bell rang, I remember, okay, got to pepper the day, stop on a dime, and then you start on a dime. Feel in, gone. See out. See out. Feel in, gone. See out.

Feel in, gone. See rest. See rest. See in, gone. No hesitation. Not, oh, I got to sit here for 15 minutes and focus on my breath and then I can note what's going on.

No. See out, gone. See out, gone. Feel in, gone.

Okay? Just start on a dime. No hesitation. Because as, who was that that said that? Can't remember right now. It'll come, Victor Frankel. Victor Frankel said, between the stimulus and the response, there is a gap.

Therein lies your freedom. In daily life, stuff comes up and about three seconds later, a reaction occurs from you. The degree to which there is mindfulness in that three seconds or two seconds, therein is measured your freedom. So we want to be able to implement these techniques instantly. Because in daily life, two or three seconds, if you're not Johnny on the spot with mindfulness, the terrorists are in the cockpit. You follow my metaphor? Okay.

The lizard brain is going to run the show. And then you look back and it's like, why did I do that? When I could have done this other thing. So if you have to do actions where you just have to do the action and you can't keep a technique going, that's okay. But then pepper it. Stop on a dime. Stop the action. Occasionally start on a dime.

Just bring your AAA game, even if it's only for two minutes, to whatever got stirred up. I don't know what your experience will be, but my experience is that the forces of past and future are what I have to face when I stop on a dime. It's like there's this tidal force that says, look back at what just happened. Look forward as to what needs to happen next. So there's this powerful pull of past and future. Time before and time after.

T.S. Eliot has a whole poem about this. Maybe I'll read it next time. Lamenting how everyone lives in time before and time after. Almost everyone. Very few people live in the present.

## SCIENCE of ENLIGHTENMENT (book excerpt) ~ Shinzen Young

□ Have you ever been in a situation of extreme danger where time slowed down, everything got peaceful, and you felt extremely focused and without fear and able to respond in a remarkably effective way? When I ask this question to any large group, several people will always raise their hands and say yes. One woman described going into a state like this when she almost drowned in California's Kern River. As the result of being so tranquil and present, she avoided panic and was able to survive the incident.

She added an interesting comment. If only I could have bottled that state, I could have addicted the world to it. People who have experienced this spontaneous state of extraordinary focus often say that it was the most meaningful day of their life and that it changed them forever. Sometimes it happens under circumstances of exceptional stress, in sports, in combat, terminal illness, accident, or assault.

But it can also happen at the opposite end of the spectrum. When you're extremely safe and connected, say while walking in the forest alone or during a particularly profound experience of making love, in these circumstances, you again find that time slows down, your mind becomes very peaceful, and you're very present and focused and unified with what's going on. What few people realize is that such states of presence and focus are trainable. You don't have to wait for unusual or extreme conditions in order to experience them. And it doesn't have to be sporadic or short-lived.

It can be a permanent abode. Indeed, any person can live their day-to-day life with that level of focus. In other words, a person's baseline of focus can be elevated through systematic practice. The discovery that extraordinary focus can be intentionally cultivated is one of the most significant findings the human species has made. It has enormous ramifications for both our personal lives and our world. The systematic training and focus is called meditation practice. It's the basic tool in the science of enlightenment.

# SHAKTIPAT or ENERGY TRANSMISSION in BUDDHISM ~ Shinzen

Young

So, I had some interesting questions that people gave me. So one was, is there anything like Shaktipat in Buddhism? So how many people know what the word Shaktipat means? Just curious.

Not as many as I would have thought. Well, Shakti is a Sanskrit word meaning energy, and pat means to fall or confer. So Shaktipat is a sort of zap of energy that you get from a teacher, often within a Hindu context, but I think it could be generalized from that.

Usually done in some sort of ritualized way. The most famous example would be students come and the teacher touches them with a peacock feather or something like this, puts their hand on them, looks at them, does something to cause Shakti to arise within that person. So the question is, is there Shaktipat in Buddhism? And that actually can be answered in a whole bunch of different ways.

First of all, Shakti is related to Kundalini Shakti. So where does that fit in Buddhism? Where does this energy, which is sometimes expressed in terms of heat, sometimes expressed in terms of a movement of the spine and so forth, where does this notion fit in terms of Buddhist practice? Well, the simple explanation is, it's an aspect of what I call flow. And what I call flow is just my way of talking about impermanence. So there's two ways that people can relate to impermanence.

One is, well, it's what happens when you bring a lot of concentration, clarity and equanimity to ordinary sensory experiences. Then they present themselves in a wave paradigm as opposed to a particle paradigm. So there is no special energy separate from any ordinary experience. In other words, the so-called materiality of the world, the carnality of one's body, the somethingness of one's mind, all of these just turn out to be what happens when you don't have a complete experience of seeing, hearing and feeling.

And when you have a complete experience, which is just another way to say, have a very clear, concentrated and equanimous experience, when you have a mindful experience, in other words, beyond a certain critical value of mindfulness, those ordinary experiences become extraordinary. They show you their wave nature as opposed to their particle somethingness nature. So there's no energy separate from what is ordinary. Or a metaphor that might be taken from Einstein is he said that matter is just frozen energy.

So ordinary sensory experience, inner and outer seeing, inner and outer hearing, inner and outer body, that's just flow, that's just energy that has been coagulated by what? Well, it's been coagulated by incomplete experiencing of it. The other way to relate to the energy thing is that there's this energy and then there is, in contrast to that, the material world. And then the goal is to somehow get beyond the material world and to get to this energy which is desirable. And that leads to a rather different paradigm, which is that, well, there are ways of manipulating this energy and causing this energy to be transferred and enhancing it and so forth. So certain traditions like Kundalini Yoga, Qi Gong, Nei Gong in China and so forth, they sort of work from a perspective of, well, there's this thing called Shakti, there's this thing called Qi, it's this energy thing and we cultivate it, we manipulate it, we work with it and make it stronger and stronger and we can actually use it for doing stuff. That's one paradigm. And I think that's a legitimate paradigm.

There's nothing wrong with that. Then there is the paradigm that I would use, which is that there's sensory experience and Qi equals MC squared. So by fully experiencing the



materiality of things, the non-materiality becomes evident. Now there's nothing to say that a person couldn't work within both of these paradigms. I was once at a conference of Western teachers with the Dalai Lama and someone asked about mixing practices because a lot of Western Buddhists and a lot of Western Buddhist teachers have more than one lineage that has influenced them. So the question was put to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and he said, well, it's okay, but you just, when you do one practice, you do that practice and in the afternoon if you do some other practice, then you do that practice. So as long as you can understand the complementarity of them and use each system as its own system, then that's okay. So there's nothing to say that you couldn't do Kundalini yoga or Qigong, which involves manipulating the quote energy, and also do Vipassana, where you're simply paying attention to what is and if flow becomes evident, you have the option to pay attention to it. And yes, indeed, the more you pay attention to it, the more prominent it becomes.

That does tend to create a feedback loop in that way. So Shakti, so now we know the Shakti part, what that means. So is there transference of energy from a teacher to a student in Buddhism? And the fact is, in Tibetan Buddhism, yeah, big time. And it's formalized as initiations and there are whole ceremonies built around it and so forth. So yes, there certainly is that structure within certain parts of the Buddhist world. But what I like more is the way Shakti part is done in the Zen tradition, at least in Rinzai Zen. I'm not that familiar with Soto Zen. Soto Zen is a little different. In Soto Zen, the Roshi sits with you, and in Soto Zen, you face the wall, but the Roshi faces out and sees everyone. So that means everyone that's fidgeting or doing whatever, it's eyes open practice, right? Now I guess in some sense, maybe this is a little bit of a Buddhist guilt trip. It's like, maybe you're not going to fidget so much because you know you're impacting on the Roshi's see out.

But you get uncomfortable enough and lost in your own misery, pretty soon, I don't think that guilt trip really helps very much. People do move and fidget and whatever. And so the gift of the Soto Zen Roshi's is that they just take in all of that and metabolize it as part of their sitting. But it's done in the Zen Do because that, but the cool thing is you've actually got not just a Roshi, but maybe a bunch of Roshi's sitting with you in the Zen Do. In Rinzai Zen, as far as I've ever experienced it, the Roshi doesn't go to the Zen Do. You go to the Roshi, but you have one on one interactions in which you are given koans, which you've all heard about and I've talked about. So that one on one interaction with the Roshi is in fact Shaktipat, but it's never talked about that way.

You either catch on or you don't. So in the interaction while you're on the surface seemingly working on this koan, at the depths that master is grabbing your belly button. And how do they do that? Well, some of you may remember the teachings of Don Juan by Carlos Castaneda.

So it's about this anthropologist from UCLA that goes to Arizona and starts to work with this Yati Indian and loses all objectivity and gets sucked into that culture's way of experiencing things. And this is true. It actually happened. It's like a really interesting and cool story. So in the first book, at one point, this anthropologist, Carlos, asks Don Juan, which is the fictitious name of the Yati shaman that he worked with, whenever I'm around you, all this weird shit happens.

What is it? And he said, you're just seeing the power of my not doing. Now when I read that, I understood. I don't think the anthropologist understood. Not at that time.

It was just another mysterious, weird thing that this guy said. You're just seeing the power of my not doing. Those Roshis, they don't do anything to grab your belly button.

In fact, it's the opposite. It's their emptiness that's grabbing you. Their pure doingness. The fact that they are a flow, whether they're laughing or whether they're bawling you out, it's just wind of nature.

You pick up on their body language, you pick up on all of those things, and that is indeed Shakti. See, that's sort of the difference between Vipassana and Zen. There's a lot of differences.

I mean, obviously they come from different cultures, historically, etc. But practice-wise, a gross oversimplification would be that in Vipassana you observe sensory experience until you realize its impermanent nature. Maybe that's as far as you go, or maybe if you're lucky, you go beyond that to not only experience the senses as flow, but to actually ride on the flow, meaning that the bounciness of the void starts to speak through you and move your arms and so forth. You might say that that's impermanence affecting the motor output in addition to the sensory input. So in Vipassana you work with the sensory input, and some Vipassana teachers it affects their motor output and they have that bouncy, liberated quality that you get in Zen. But other Vipassana teachers it doesn't affect the motor output and they're more inert, I guess would be the way to put it. Whereas in Zen, this is like, once again, don't get me wrong, this is a gross oversimplification, but in Zen they first train you to, they train your motor circuits into how to flow with impermanence.

It's the Zen schedule. And it's the whole energy of the interaction that you have with the Roshi, who's like moving in certain ways and then you find yourself moving in those ways. So you're sort of training your output to flow with expansion and contraction, and then hopefully at some point it will go beyond your motor circuits and start to infect your perceptions of self and world so that your senses begin to flow with expansion and contraction and you get liberation.

So it's almost like they do the same task but in opposite order to a certain extent. So that for me is a kind of Shaktipat because the Roshi is conveying the activity of emptiness, the Buddha nature, the activity of impermanence to you. And it's not talked about but if you know how to pick up on it, then you carry that with you back into the Zen dome. So the difference with this kind of Shaktipat versus the Hindu formalized ceremonies or the Tibetan formalized ceremonies, the difference is first of all it's not talked about that way. You either pick up on it or you don't. And there's no formalized ceremony, ostensibly it's just you interacting with this weird person and doing these weird things. So I like that because there's not all this, I don't know, specialness about it or what have you. But what I really like about it and once again what represents a very significant difference from say the normal Shaktipat thing that you get from some Baba, okay.

I'm not dissing it, I'm just trying to describe the situation. Normally what's going to happen, you get your Shaktipat from the Baba and then what happens after that? Well you all eat prasad, you sit around, you chant bhajans and everybody feels great and you all talk about how great the Guru is and then you leave and when you need your next fix you come for your next fix. However in the Zen formal Shaktipat you go in, you have this incredible experience with the Roshi and then what? Then you go back to the Zen and if it's in the winter it's not heated and it is freaking cold. If it's in the summer there's no fan and there's mosquitoes and it's hot and you just want to sleep but they'll beat you and yell at you and essentially you're going back to the samurai torture chamber. And there you get to test to what extent you have truly metabolized the Shakti.

And you now apply it to the samurai torture chamber. So that the goal here is to create equals, not disciples. Every Guru worth his mala should want equals, not disciples. For real, not lip service, for real. In fact as I implied yesterday every Guru worth his mala or her mala should want students that are better than them.

End of story. So that form of Shaktipat you got to use it. You got to use it for something real, aching legs, sleepy head, emotions running up the yin yang because you're being abused all day and it's pushing every button that can be pushed. Okay, now how real is that Shakti? Can you experience that as flow? And that's how that Roshi got to be the way they are and so it goes. So yes, there's that kind of Shaktipat in Buddhism.

And then there's the daily Shaktipat that we all have now, don't we? Because we're always sharing energy with each other. Everyone. To the extent that a person has a practice to that extent the people around them pick up on that. And so you're all giving Shaktipat to other people whether you're aware of it or not. It may not be as powerful because number one, people don't necessarily have the expectation and the expectation is of course a big part of it. And number two, well your Shakti might not be quite as intense as someone that's meditated 80 years in a monastic training but you got something, okay.

And you're also getting Shaktipat from other people. And in fact, this is going to sound a little weird but you get it from animals who very much are in the flow and you get it from your children until they develop a talking self. In the first few years of life, what does infant, infant in English, infance from the Latin infance, which is the present participle of fari which means to speak. Same root as confabulate and so forth. So the infant is the one that doesn't speak yet. Has not acquired external language, has not presumably acquired internal language but there's a certain magic period there where the, when you're attending to a neonate and so forth or I don't know how far the magic extends on average but you know probably, you know the first year at least, where basically your infant, your child is a Roshi. They are just space expanding and contracting.

And if that's then parenting, every time you take care of a baby, I think nature intends that to be a sunset, a Shaktipat for the parent to recharge their batteries which are strained to the max by the parenting endeavor. So that's, you know, there's that. Yeah it's interesting about the no self, the not doing, this is a really weird story. Okay, they tell me that I'm supposed to tell stories.

So that's supposed to make a good Dharma talk. This is a true story. So many years ago I was driving through Santa Monica with a student of mine who has since passed away.

I don't know if any of you remember about Martinez but anyway, this is way back there. So we were driving in Santa Monica and we had this weird psychic experience. It was like a truly psychic experience. So we're driving down the street and we both started to look at this homeless person who was, they were just on the street corner and it was evident that there was some mental illness there.

But they were just sort of like, you know, just sort of like moving, okay. And we looked at this guy and we looked at each other and we knew that we had had exactly the same thought and it was true. And the thought was if you clean this guy up, put white robes, put him in front of a group of people and don't let him say anything, people would have Shaktipat. And that's a fairly complicated thought. Because there was just no self there.

He was just part of nature. Now apropos of stories, years later I was at another student's house and so I see this book and it's one of these like photo books, you know, that people would put on like a coffee table or whatever this was on, her piano. And I'm hesitating now because I'm trying to remember the exact title of the book, unfortunately.

I don't plan these talks very much, so. Okay anyway, it's a picture book. It's just pictures. It's like this huge book of photographs. And I start to look through these photographs and what's interesting is that there's nothing by the photographer, the person that's the author of the book.

There's nothing at all. But what there is is an intro, a preamble by Toni Morrison. Now that's a fairly important person in the world of art and literature and so forth. So that tells you, well this is somehow a significant book. But there's nothing by the person who actually took the photos.

This is anything about anything at all. In other words, the photos have to speak for themselves. This is big book, okay. And I'm flipping through this book and I'm like freaking out because it's very evident to me, these are all portraits by the way.

It's very evident to me what this book is about and that I had never seen a book like this ever. And so this is, I think some of you know Markel. This is at Markel's house.

So anyway, I go to Markel and I say, but this book is amazing. And she said, well, you know Bergman, the guy that wrote it or that photographed, I guess we lost our power. The photographer is a distant relative of mine. So I say, well, can you get his telephone number? He said, sure, I got his telephone number. So we called him up and he was there. And I said, I told him what I thought his book was about.

And he freaked out. And he said that I was the only person who ever understood what the book was about. Of all the people that, you want to check this out? Of all the people that had seen it in exhibitions or whatever. So now I'm sure you're quite curious as to what it's about. Now, damn it, I don't want to get the title wrong.

Let me just see if I can find it. You're surfing the web. Yeah. This is a good day and time. Let's just try here. I was going to do something else with the internet than this.

I'm very klutzy and slow. I don't think that's going to work. You got it working? Okay. Let's see if we find it. Okay, I found it. That's just amazing. Here it is. And that gave them time to get this fixed. Untangle and be free.

People don't like the divide and conquer, so I gave them a more politically correct way to say it. So it is by Robert Bergman. The name of the book is A Kind of Rapture. So what it is, is he went through the rust belt of the United States, the old decaying cities, photographing street people who for whatever reason, usually a combination of a hard life and physical and mental illness, had been thrust into a no self state. In other words, people for whom the blows of life had driven them to a no self, a rapturous no self experience.

He went around the country looking for those kinds of people, catching them at the moment where they manifested the non-ego that their hard life had taken them to. And you get picture after picture after picture so that the message, you know, you see one or two pictures like that, it doesn't have the same impact. But if you see 50 pictures like that, then it hits you what the whole thing is about. So the reason I thought it was so extraordinary is that although there's a lot of books about enlightenment or no self coming about through practice, and there are a number of books of people, written by people that have had spontaneous enlightenment experiences, what no one's looked at is this whole thing, this whole other aspect. And so it's, in terms of its subject matter, it's very unusual. And then in terms of the, so the message is very unusual and the medium is unusual. Instead of writing a book talking about this phenomenon, he shows it to you. And you either get it or you don't. So anyway, that's a whole other little riff, but apropos of where you might go for your Shakti Paschal.

## SHAMANISM ~ Shinzen Young

Well, there's a lot to say about shamanism, so I'll try to sort of limit it. First of all, I actually talk about this in my book, *The Science of Enlightenment*, the notion that you can look upon consciousness as sort of like a three-layered parfait, and you have surface ordinary objectified experience that might be called conventional reality. Then you have the absolute rest and the formless doing that is at the very quote center, if we wanted to use that metaphor. It's not perfectly good, but if you imagine it's a sphere and there's the surface, and then there's what's in the center, which is the dharmakaya, it's formless. Then there's all these intermediate realms. And if we think of the spiritual path as a journey from surface to source, some people are going to traverse those intermediate realms without any unusual phenomena at all.

They're just going to go right down. Some people are going to encounter the pool of poison and pain and trauma and such big time, which is sort of the Freudian subconscious. Some people are going to encounter the Jungian subconscious, God's, ghosts, ancestors, healing abilities, etc.

etc. The spirit world, basically what native people would refer to as a spirit world. Some people encounter both the Jungian and the Freudian version of the subconscious. As I say, some people encounter neither. They just go right down. There can be a couple extremes with regards to this map of the journey.

One is not uncommon. So you're on the surface and the journey is not turning 180 degrees away from the world. It's actually turning orthogonal. It's turning 90 degrees into an independent dimension, which is the dimension of depth as opposed to surface. So now you're going down.

Of course, each level has its own surface. One extreme is you go down a little bit and you encounter either the Freudian subconscious or the Jungian subconscious. If it's the Freudian, you just don't want to go there. If it's the pleasant side of the Jungian, well, that's one thing. But if it's sort of weird and scary archetypal material, you don't want to go there.

So you flail your way back to the surface like a drowning person gasping for air. I'm never going to go down there again because that's just too weird. That's one extreme. Another extreme, which is the extreme I recommend, is you just keep going down no matter what.

Keep a plumb line, a direct vector towards the source. It's not just me. The Christian tradition says the same thing, although they think of it as going up rather than down. But it doesn't matter. The direction of the coordinates, the grid, doesn't make any difference at all.

St. John of the Cross drew this picture of this mountain, Mount Carmel, which actually exists in the Holy Land. It's near the city of Haifa in northern Israel. Cho and I visited there.

It's pretty cool. It's the origin of the Carmelite order, which was one of the main meditating orders back in the day. Anyway, he drew Mount Carmel and he talked about *subida del monte Carmelo*, the ascent of Mount Carmel. In this metaphor, God or the source is not at the source.

It's actually at the pinnacle, but it's exactly the same thing. On it he writes *nada, nada, nada, y en monte nada*. This is how you're going to get there. Nothing, nothing, nothing. When you finally get to the peak of the mountain, nothing with a big capital N. Then he shows these wild monsters and flowers and things.

He says, if you want to ascend Mount Carmel, you cannot allow yourself to be distracted by the flowers nor frightened by the wild beasts. You have to just go straight up. Same general idea. The other extreme is, no matter what sorts of bouquets or beasties you may encounter, as you go down, you just keep going down.

Which in terms of classical dry vipassana would just mean whatever comes up you just observe, just observe, just observe. That's an extreme. Here's another extreme. You go down to a certain level and you get interested in the content of that level. Usually it's something that involves special powers. Without realizing it, you turn 90 degrees again. The pernicious part of this is you don't know it. You think you're on a vector to the source, but in fact you're now going parallel to ordinary experience out into the realms of power, exploring them.

You can spend a lot of time doing that. As I say, there's actually nothing wrong with exploring those realms, unless you think you're still going down. Then that becomes a shunt away from progress.

What's in between? So between turning 90 degrees again, right? You're here on the surface, 90 degrees down, and then gradually without realizing it, you turn 90 degrees again, right? Now you're going parallel, but you don't know it. One extreme is you're only interested in the realms of power. The Lakota Sioux call those people Pejuta Wiccasha, which actually literally is a medicine person or a healer. Then the other extreme is what I mentioned. You don't go into those realms at all, you just purify and get insight. In Lakota that is referred to as a Wiccasha Wakana, a sacred person. The spectrum of classical shamanism all over the world, and this is the original religion of our species everywhere. There was a time when everyone, as far as I anthropologists know, everyone sort of had essentially the same religion, and it was shamanism. This is the old time religion. Judaism, Christianity, Confucianism, what have you, they may be old, but they're not old the way this is old. They're not 10, 20, 30, 40,000 years old, okay? So the spectrum of classical shamanism ranges through all the oblique angles, from pure power to pure purification, but most shamans that I've ever met are on an intermediate angle. They're definitely gaining no self-purification insight.

There's a component to that vector of going down, but there's also a component out of it. And depending on the relative magnitude of your interest in power and what the spirits have to say versus the egolessness and oneness and so forth. So that's why I speak of the spectrum of classical shamanism.

It goes all the way from... And in the power area, you can actually get cultural negatives that are very intense for those cultures. You can have very dysfunctional cultures.

It's not just modern people that are messed up, okay? There are traditional cultures that have really messed up views of the world. It's not uncommon, for example, to believe that death is not natural. If someone dies, it's because someone killed them and probably killed them with medicine.

And by medicine, I mean magic. So American Indians have an entire vocabulary. It's English, so they can talk inter-tribally, but it's English you would never understand. You wouldn't know what it means to shoot medicine at someone or to get engaged in a medicine war with another tribe. That's warfare in the power realms, and they take that absolutely as seriously as warfare on the surface.

It's the same deal. Someone dies, go to the shaman, why did they die? Those guys up the river shot medicine at us. And then we got to either shoot arrows at them or shoot medicine back. So it's not necessarily a good thing, okay? It really depends on the culture. I mean, I've had friends for whom medicine wars were a serious business. I have to say, I don't share the paradigm, but I knew it was very real for them. And they were from these kinds of cultures and so forth. So anyway, there's this spectrum that I call the spectrum of

classical shamanism. And if like, well, I guess maybe this is going into too much detail. There's a lot of fear in the Navajo culture, for example, of shape shifters.

So there can be some real negatives around some of this stuff. So let me tell you a story, a personal story about shamanism. Years and years ago, decades ago, actually, I was running a retreat in Tucson.

Steve knows, I'm going to talk about Steve knows this medicine person. So we were running a retreat at this ranch, Doug Boy's ranch. And this is nigh unto 40 years ago, I think.

So a while back, maybe not that, maybe 1985, I guess. And so Doug was very into Native American spirituality, but he'd grown up in Korea, actually. His father was, I guess, in the military. So he knew a lot about Asian culture.

And he wanted the Buddhist teachers to get together with the Native American teachers. So he said, there's a local Tohono O'odham. That's a tribe that anthropologists used to call the Pima Papago. So there's a local Tohono O'odham Indian.

His name is Rupert Encinas. And if you want, he'll do a sweat lodge for you, sweat lodge ceremony. So I said, well, what is it? Tell me what, you know, after the retreat, we could do this sweat lodge. So it was, well, what's a sweat lodge? Describe it to me. He described it and made sense.

I could see how it would fit with Buddhist practice. And he said, Rupert is a pipe carrier. He's a road man in the Native American church, which is the peyote religion, which is the North American version of ayahuasca, basically. And he's a sun dancer. I said, well, what's a sun dance? And he described that and sort of made sense to me. So we had this sweat lodge.

And I remember, so that was my first lodge. And so it's out on the rez and there's no technology. He didn't even have electricity in his house at that time. I mean, now he's got a cell phone and YouTube segments and things like that. But things change, right? But back then, he didn't even have electricity.

But so anyway, so I remember there was this point where, you know, you open the flap. And he was running it the Lakota way. There's different ways of running a sweat lodge. He was doing it the Lakota way. So the Lakota or Eastern Sioux, the person that pours the water sits at the door. So he opens the door.

All the steam goes out. There is the pristine Sonora Desert without any telephone lines or cars or anything. It looked the way it looked 20,000 years ago. And the sun's coming down.

And it's sort of glancing rays. He's full-blood Indian, just classic. Looks like something right out of the Smithsonian Institute. So his profile is long hair, you know, because you unbraid your hair in the ceremony, right? So he's got the long hair. And like classic Native American features. And you could see the sun was revealing a chest full of piercing scars from the sun dance. Like he'd sun danced 16 times at that time.

And that was 35 years ago. And it was like, oh my God, this is a time tunnel that we're being allowed to enter to experience what our really remote ancestors experienced. And it was just amazing to me. And when I got out, I remember crawling out. It was pretty hot lodge.

And I remember the first thought that went through my mind. Oh, this is what they call, quote, primitive religion. Because shamanism used to be called primitive religion. And the reason for the air quotes is it was so advanced, so subtle, so multi-leveled, so psycho-spiritually sophisticated.

Weaving group therapy into prayer, into the power realms, into purification through equanimity, into being forced to concentrate because you just can't do anything but concentrate. So it's like, oh, primitive religion. And meaning, of course, that when the

Europeans came here, it's true that a metal ax is a more advanced tool than a stone ax. But I guess they assumed that because the physical technology was quote, primitive, that the psycho-spiritual life of those people was primitive.

And it was the very antithesis of that. So anyway, that was my first encounter with shamanism. And I'll be seeing Rupert again next month when I go to Tucson, 35, however many years later. We're still doing ceremonies together.



## SHINZEN & DAVE take a break from the BRAIN STUDY

I am yep. There we go. Let's turn over. Good. Good. Good.

## SHINZEN APPROVES of RICHIE DAVIDSON's VISION

One of the main laboratories for affective neuroscience, neuroscience that is looking at human emotion, is also one of the main laboratories for contemplative neuroscience. And both of those terms, affective neuroscience, the neuroscience of human emotion, and contemplative neuroscience, which is turning the lens of science towards contemplative experience, both those terms as far as I know were coined by the same person. And that person's lab is one of the main places where this kind of research goes on.

And who is that person and where is that lab? That's Richie Davidson at the University of Wisconsin, my alma mater actually. I did my undergraduate work at UCLA in Asian languages, but I did Buddhist studies at the University of Wisconsin back in the day, when it was still weird to be interested in Buddhism. But things were beginning to change. So there was no contemplative neuroscience at the University of Wisconsin in 1970. That's all of course much, much later, but there was Buddhist studies. You want to know why the University of Wisconsin in my day was the premier location for the academic study of Buddhism? Well, it's like Wisconsin, why Wisconsin of all places? I mean, you might think Berkeley or Harvard or something.

Why was the first PhD program in Buddhism at the University of Wisconsin? Well, it's a nice little example of what in Buddhism is called pratityasamutpada, the causal net, how this being that is, this being that is, this being that is, leads to some interesting consequences. By the way, it was a magic time. Let's see, I must have gone there in 68, I think, is when I, yeah, probably that's right.

1968, Madison, 68, right? Well, you know, it was crazy, right? I mean, it's like the Vietnam War was raging. My Buddhist education, three years of graduate school, paid for by the DoD, the Department of Defense of the United States government. Why? Why are they giving out like huge endowments to study Buddhism? Yeah, they realized there were political consequences to Buddhism in Southeast Asia. Now there are political consequences to Islam, so there's lots of money if you want to study Arabic. Well, there was a lot of money available if you wanted to study Buddhism. So yeah, the Department of Defense paid for my PhD education in Buddhism.

And I paid them back by being in all sorts of anti-government demonstrations, which Madison was very famous for, if you know the history of the time. It was pretty wild. I mean, I didn't do violent stuff. Some people got really violent, blew up one of the buildings on campus.

I don't know if you remember that history or whatever. It's pretty crazy. And I loved it.

And we got one of our people, a dope-smoking hippie elected mayor. Yeah, it was a pretty interesting time. And that's where you would get a PhD in Buddhist studies. And now, if you look around, the people that are now retiring academics in the Buddhist field, those are the people I went to school with.

So I see these books published by this one and that one. I remember he was really crappy in Sanskrit. I had to help him out. It's sort of fun. But I didn't go down an academic course. I got shunted, as you know, into something else.

But I still have those sanskaras. You guys have to put up with dozens of languages and all sorts of arcane factoids that I find amazingly interesting. And it's probably pretty irrelevant to a lot of people. So Madison, when I was there, there was no contemplative neuroscience. But there was Buddhist studies. So why Wisconsin? What arrows can you line up that point to Wisconsin, of all places, being the premier location for Buddhist studies? Just in North America.

Doesn't seem to quite compute. So when you think of Wisconsin, besides the Green Bay Packers, what else do you think of? Cheese. You think of cheese.

And why do you think of cheese? By the way, it is related to cheese. Dairy. Well, dairy.

Dairy is part of farming. And the University of Wisconsin had the best agriculture programs. It specialized in agriculture science. Because big agriculture state. So there was a science specialty in agriculture. Now the country of India has had a perennial problem.

And that perennial problem is feeding itself. So lots of people came over from India to study agriculture science at the University of Wisconsin. So now there's a general tendency in the academic world, if you have a lot of people from a certain region of the globe, for whatever reason, are coming to your university, well, it also sort of makes sense to have area studies for that region at that university. Case in point, USC. What is USC's specialty as far as area studies? Well it may be different now. But in my day, USC was where you went for Islamic studies.

Middle Eastern. Why? Because a lot of wealthy people in the Middle East could buy their way for their kids into USC. So you had a lot of people from the Middle East and you had a lot of money coming from the Middle East. So there's big center for Islamic and Middle Eastern research, at least there was 30 years ago when I used to use the library there.

This big Islamic center. So it made sense because we had a lot of people coming from India to the University of Wisconsin. Well let's make Indian studies, not Indian in the sense of American Indian, but East Indian. So Indian studies. Studies of Indic civilization. And as people got interested in Buddhism, well that is a product of India, so Buddhist studies make sense at the University of Wisconsin because it has an area specialty in India. So yes, cheese is responsible ultimately for all of this esoterica, these weird languages that you have to endure me talking about. Because I was in a PhD program for Buddhist studies.

So anyway, now when we think of Wisconsin, we have affective neuroscience and contemplative neuroscience. How cool is that? And that's Richie, Richie Davidson. And some of you actually know him pretty well.

Most of you know him by reputation. So the first time I ever visited Richie, the first thing he laid on me when he was showing me around his lab, which wasn't nearly as big as it is now because the Dalai Lama gave him a couple million dollars. They're really doing pretty good, but he still had a pretty substantial, he had a whole building. And he was showing me around and he laid out this vision that he had for what his graduate program in neuroscience would be. And the phrase he used was a science sangha. Science sangha, a nice, yeah, a community of meditation practitioners who were also scientists. So I don't know if it was required, but certainly everyone that I knew that studied, that was a neuroscientist in Richie's program was also a meditator. And the idea being that it's not just, well, we need to understand these experiences, so we have to meditate. But his idea was that this is going to make us better people and specifically better scientists. So that's a model right there.

It's actually happening. Something that meditation can bring. If I didn't have all these other responsibilities, if I had a lot of spare time, what I would probably do is develop meditation courses specifically aimed at geeks and scientists. Yeah, it's like, just bring that in. So that's something that enlightenment or meditation can give to science that will help science do its job better.

## SHINZEN Defines ENLIGHTENMENT

Yes. Could you define what you mean by enlightenment in this case? Stream entry. Stream entry. Could you define that for me please? Long, long, long piece on the internet, on my YouTube channels. But you would like the executive summary.

Please. Executive summary is that you have a kind of, let's see, that you realize that there is no thing inside you called a self. Sometimes that realization happens suddenly and you can read about that in books like Three Pillars of Zen. They've got all these testimonials in there about people for whom it happened really suddenly.

But it's my experience that it usually sneaks up on people. Sometimes they don't realize, quite realize how enlightened they've become because they gradually acclimatize. But the Buddhist definition of enlightenment is that you realize that there's never been a thing inside you called a self. Now, there is certainly an activity inside you called a personality. And paradoxically, the more clearly you realize that there's no thing inside you called a self, the more freed up the wave inside you called personality becomes. That would be the executive summary.

## Shinzen describes all "5 Ways" before Guiding Steph ~ Shinzen

### Young

OK, now, if I say I am stressed, I'm stressed, I've got my mind is spinning, and I would like to be able to use some of your meditation techniques to just help me in like 5 or 10 minutes. Is there something that I could do to, like, this program sounds wonderful, like a great support in the long run, and you talked about this daily practice, but what's something I can do, like, right now that would just help my stress level? You mean like literally right now? Yes, literally right now, this instant. OK.

Is there something I could do? Yes, I will guide you in a practice. OK. So, for that, I'd like you to... What do I do? Well, you sit up. OK. Does it matter how my hands go? No, just comfortable, whatever.

Lengthen your spine. OK. Let your whole body settle. Close your eyes. And I'm going to briefly describe some options as to how we can work, and then you can choose which one you want to do, OK? OK.

So, one thing that we can do, I'll go through a brief description of the five ways, and then I'll let you choose. Are my eyes still closed? Yeah. OK. You can keep your eyes closed and just sort of be settling in and sort of digest the information I give you, and then you can choose which of the focusing methods you want to do.

OK. So, one of the ways is focus in, and that involves observing your thoughts and emotions by dividing your subjective experience into feel, image, talk. So that's emotional body sensation, mental picture, and auditory thoughts, self-talk, that kind of thing. So one of the methods we can use is to break your emotional and, in general, your subjective experience, your thoughts, your feelings, your reactions, and such. We can break them into manageable pieces.

It's sort of like divide and conquer. So that's focus in, working with your subjective experience. Alternatively, we can explore the power of now by doing the opposite, letting go of feel, image, talk, and anchoring yourself in external sights, external sounds, and physical-type body sensations, touch, sight, sound. So that's always the present. Feel, image, talk might be memory, plan, fantasy, but touch, sight, sound are always now. You've probably heard of the power of now. So that's one way to experience, in a tangible way, the power of now, is by focusing out on touch, sight, sound.

So that's two possibilities, focus in, feel, image, talk, focus out, touch, sight, sound. Another possibility we talked about earlier is focus on restful states to sort of cool out. Another possibility is to focus on how things constantly change, the dynamic side of experience, how things flow and vanish. We'll call that focus on change. So you can focus in, focus out, focus on rest, focus on change. Or the final possibility is that you can intentionally cultivate positive states of thought and emotion. So instead of just observing feel, image, talk, you can proactively create positive feel, image, or talk, and then sort of radiate that positivity, sort of the power of positive thinking kind of thing. We'll call that focus on positives. So those are the five ways, they're fundamentally contrasting strategies. And I'd like you to choose if you'd like to focus in, focus out, focus on rest, focus on change, or focus on positives. And then I'll guide you in that regard. All of those could be good for working with stress. Each in a different way.

## Shinzen Describes his Interactively Guided Web Program

Yes? I'd like to request another level of training based on the grid. I'm thinking back when I started to learn Aikido, there would be drill on a particular practice and then drill on another practice. It was up to me to choose what I wanted to practice.

I tended to just choose the ones I liked best. How about as either a constantly available web page or a downloadable program, you could put in total length of the session, for example, and then you could change the length of the session, the length of the session, and the length of the session, and the length of the session in the course. How about, with the same application, you could do a guide training program. How about as either a constantly available webpage or a downloadable program, you could put in total length of the session and change time, and then it would randomly say, feel in, do nothing, see out, things like that, so you had to learn to keep changing. You'll see great minds.

It's great. The program has set sequence, it has free choice, and it has random call. It's already written in the program. Is it downloadable? No, the text has been recorded, the flowcharts and the logic is completely done. We're in the process of editing the files and coding the program.

But all my work is done. I recorded everything, including it has that feature, and my term for it in the program, I call it, that you can have a random call. And the very parameters that you mentioned are clickable in the program. That's wonderful. That's like Randori in Aikido. Randori. I forgot about Randori. Yeah, we're going to call it Randori. What does that mean? Randori? We charged to find out what that means. Charlie, explain Randori in Aikido. It means instead of working with one person attacking you for your higher level test, several black belts are attacking you simultaneously and you have to be still standing at the end of five minutes.

You've got to pay a lot of attention and flow. See, Ran actually, it's funny because it does mean random, but that's just a coincidence. It's nothing related to English word. Randori means to take, so it's like you're taking on at random, literally in Japanese.

## Shinzen Describes His Sleepiness Turning Into Bliss

Actually, I got really sleepy during the afternoon sit today. And, you know, I mean, I've been doing this for decades and decades and I learned something new every single time. It's amazing. So what I did is I got really physical with it. It was just like the physical sensations of sleepiness. And I did the thing that I described in the group process this morning about zoom in and zoom out.

So the primary was there was one primary here and one primary here. I get this sort of yucky sensation here and then I get this painful, yawny hypoxia sensation here. So I like zoomed in to the center and then I was able to have this expansive concentration where I could really feel the whole body at once.

I mean, like really in a lot of detail, but just that one flavor, the sleepiness flavor. So like zoom in and then cover the whole thing and do the same thing here. And man, about halfway through the set, it just, it just turned into this like slow lava lamp thing. And it just got like really integrated and really blissful. It's like, anyway, so, you know, you got to make a start somewhere and you learn and then you learn more and you learn more and you grow with it.

## Shinzen Describes the Vajrayana Practice

So, in being ordained as a monk, I understand you had to undergo a hundred day period in solitary. I would be very interested in hearing you talk about that experience. That sounds like a significant event to go through. It was pretty intense, especially for someone who is basically scattered, wimpy, and easily bored. I had to every day do three buddharingana rituals, and sometimes those would take an hour or two, sometimes they'd take up to five hours.

And then in between there were many other activities. The only human that I communicated with was my teacher. Where were you? I was in isolation up at Mount Koya. I had a room where I would stay, where I would sleep at night. And then during the day I'd go to the hall, the main hall of the temple, and I would do the three ceremonies. And then every two or three days I'd meet with the teacher who would teach me the next step in the ceremony.

So it's an initiation process. So by the end of the hundred days I had learned all the basic ceremonies of the Japanese buddharingana practice. On the surface they look like making offerings to deities, but in the depths what goes on is that you visualize yourself as the deity, so you replace your body image with the image of the deity. You replace your internal talk with the mantra of the deity. You make gestures with your hands called mudras, which impacts the physical body. And then you create the feel in your body, the emotional quality of the deity. You're doing all these simultaneously? All at the same time. So you've got the physical body and emotional body helped by the mudras. That's a lot to keep track of.

Well, yeah, that's the point. You replace your personal internal talk with the mantra of the deity and talk space. Then you visualize yourself as the deity, so you replace your own personal image with the deity's image. Now since we identify with body and mind, whatever goes into the brain in the place where body and mind experience is processed, the brain says, this is who I am. So if you replace the physicality and emotionality of your human self with that of an archetype, and you replace your mental images with that of the archetype, and you replace your internal talk with that of the archetype, you become the archetype. Your identity shifts from your normal human existence to this other thing. Now this is not insanity. It has to be distinguished from two states, insanity and shamanic possession.

It's neither of those. It's a systematic process designed to bring about classical enlightenment, but in a way very different from early Buddhism. In early Buddhism, you would break things down.

This part is the physical body, this part is the emotional body. You break things down into the pieces and then you would see, oh, I'm not these pieces. In Vajrayana, what you do is you work with the same pieces, but you intentionally create mythical versions of them. Notice that when you do that, you become that, and that gives you the exact same insight. In other words, in early Buddhism, you got insight into the arbitrary nature of self-identification. You become enlightened, enlightened means that your identification process is elastic.

You're nothing particular, so you can be anything, so you're everything, but you're also the nothing that's the source of everything all at the same time. In early Buddhism, they did that by dividing into pieces and then seeing, I'm none of these. But in Vajrayana, you create a mythical version of it. Notice that your identity shifts, and then when you drop that, your identity shifts back to the human, but you realize that it must all be arbitrary.

So the transition is where the insight comes. Does it depend on which deity you pick? I mean, as an actor, you're envisioning other people and you're putting it in your body, but



it's not a deity. So I imagine what deity you're picking would affect the experience, or is it simply doesn't matter what you're picking? It's very interesting how they do it. First they teach you how to do it with a wide variety of deities over that one, that hundred day period.

You get to explore many archetypes. Pick your favorite deity. Not quite, but you explore compassionate deities, you explore wrathful deities, you explore avatars of fear, you explore compassion and so forth. After you've had a chance to explore all these identities, when you complete the training, then you get your full initiation. And at the full initiation, which lasts all night, they take you blindfolded in front of this giant mandala that has all the deities of the universe in it.

They give you a flower and you hold the flower and you're completely disoriented and you drop the flower. Whatever flower the deity falls on, your master calls out the name of that deity. That's the deity that is your Ishta Devata. That's the deity that is going to be the one that has been selected by this process. Are you allowed to say what your deity was or is that a secret thing? You're not allowed to say, but it's a very interesting process, yes.

## Shinzen guides a meditation for Pain. Part I of III ~ Shinzen

### Young

I'm Shinzen Yang, and this is? My name is Richard Ford. And I'm going to demonstrate how to interactively guide a person in working with the issue of physical discomfort.

Richard, would you, or you prefer Rich? Yeah, Rich. Rich, would you say something about what you're experiencing now in terms of physical discomfort, pain and so forth? Well, the physical discomfort is in the lower back, both sides, extends down to the hip on the right side. And then occasionally it's shoulder stiffness, and I think it's associated with the back pain in the lower back. And is this a condition that's with you, like, most of the time? It's been on and off for 20-something years. I see. So it's a long-standing condition. Yes. Is it something that represents a major impediment in your life, or more just sort of an inconvenience? It's an inconvenience, but it has been a major impediment.

So it sometimes flares and becomes worse, and then other times it's not so severe. Okay. What we're going to do is I'm going to just start guiding you, and you can just follow along, and we'll see where it takes us. So I'd like you to start by closing your eyes, and you can sort of lengthen your spine and settle into your posture. Okay, good. Now, do you feel pretty settled into the posture? Yes.

Okay, good. We'll call the areas where you feel the discomfort clearly the primary areas, and I'd like you to focus for a moment on those primary areas, and get a sense of the size, shape, position, and so forth. Able to do that? Yes. And is it one connected area, or is it several disconnected areas that are the primary? Two areas. Two independent areas? Yes.

Okay, good. Now, I'd like you to check out and see if the physical discomfort in your body is limited to those two primaries, or whether the primary areas in some way affect the rest of your body. You can do a sort of conceptual experiment. You can imagine if there was not that primary discomfort, would the rest of your body be in some way more comfortable? If so, then that represents a spread of influence from the primaries. But if that's not the case, then they're truly isolated, and there's no secondary spread.

Can you make a guess as to whether... It's a spread. There's a subtle spread. Does it affect much of your body, most of your body, or the spread is not too wide? Most of it.

Okay. That is, by the way, excellent spatial resolution. Very often, when a person has a discomfort in their body, most of the suffering will be in the subtle spread.

People tend to think it's in the local intensity, and sometimes it can be, but subtle is significant, I often say, and the subtle spread, the fact that you can detect that subtle spread is highly significant. So that's excellent. So here's what I'd like you to do. I would like you to work with the, not with the primary initially, but with the subtle spread.

We're going to work with the easier material first. And I'd like you to let your attention freely float within the secondary sensations, and to just sort of note the part of your body, like knee, face, arms, that kind of thing, where there's secondary discomfort. And because that secondary discomfort is mild relative to the primary discomfort, you may be able to have perfect equanimity with it, just totally accept it.

You may not be able to totally accept the primary sensation, but you may be able to totally accept the secondary sensations, because they're milder. Does that make sense? Yes, it does. So I'm going to have you do that with spoken labels.

I'd like you to do that now. Spoken labels. In other words, you'll say out loud, knee, face. You'll note, you'll let your awareness freely float within the secondary sensations, go wherever they want, and just say out loud where you're focusing on the secondary. And that will tend to sort of circulate through your body. You'll see your awareness will just sort of naturally go from place to place within the secondary. Does that make sense? Yes. Good.

I'd like you to do that with spoken labels, and I'll just listen in. Shoulder blades. Neck muscles. My fingers.

Good. To make it more impersonal, a matter of fact, you can just make it really simple like shoulder, finger, neck, in a sort of gentle, a matter of fact voice, so you don't have to make it my or like, you make it like really simple and sort of impersonal in a matter of fact. Shoulder blades. Forearms.

Thumbs. Neck. Spine. Lower back. Good.

## Shinzen guides a meditation for Pain. Part II of III ~ Shinzen

### Young

Now, slow down the label just slightly to give yourself more time to sort of soak your awareness into that secondary sensation. And if there's no secondary sensation, if all the secondaries disappear, you can use the label nowhere. But if you're drawn to, say, your whole body, like it seems to spread through your whole body and you're aware of that, then you can use the label whole body.

And that's a good suggestion. What was happening during the silence there? Were you focusing in the same location? It felt like whole body, but it wasn't enough to say it. Just subtly the whole body? Subtly the whole body. Subtle is significant. Definitely if there's a hint of whole body, say whole body. And just open up the whole body to it. So, if you... And guessing and groping is okay, by the way.

It's perfectly okay to make a guess. Any questions so far? It's whole body now. It's a lot of whole body? Yeah. Okay, good. It may be always whole body. That's actually...

Does it seem like it wants to do that? Yes. When you say whole body, you zoom out and cover the spread. You know how if you... You have a local pressure and then you let it spread out. That will relieve the pressure. If you let those secondary sensations spread over your whole body, you may find that that dissipates some of the pressure from the local intensity after enough time.

That's the purpose for opening up to the possibility that it spreads over the whole body. So, once again, that's excellent spatial resolution. By resolution, I mean ability to be clear about what you're detecting. So, if it seems to be whole body and it's over and over again, whole body, just zoom your attention out, cover the whole body, and just let the sensation ripple and radiate out into space in all six directions out from your body. Does that instruction make sense? Yes, it does. Excellent. So, now I'd like you to continue using the spoken labels.

Again, I'll just be doing my own practice while you do that. Hips. Forearms. Ankles.

Whole body. That's perfect. By that I mean the tone of voice, the pacing, and the wording are all perfect. Once you establish this awareness, the rest is just a matter of time.

The tone of voice indicates that you have a quality that we call equanimity. The pacing of the labels guarantees that you're highly concentrated. And the wording of the labels guarantees that you're bringing sensory clarity to the experience.

In this case, the sensory clarity is the precision with regards to the location of the secondary spread sensations. Does that make sense? Yes. How what you're doing develops those three qualities? Once you have a momentum of those qualities, then it's just a numbers game.

You are setting the stage for nature to break up the suffering from this experience. It could happen in five minutes or it could take five months, depending on the depth of the challenge. You can tell by the way that you're labeling that you have a momentum of concentration, clarity, and equanimity. Once you establish that momentum, then the rest is just keeping it up and letting time pass.

Does that make sense? Yes, it does. Excellent. Now, I'd like you to continue to do that. Once again, I'm just going to do my own practice for a few minutes. We're going to give nature a chance, give some time for it.

Any questions about what we've done so far? No. It makes perfect sense? It makes perfect sense. Excellent. I'll pause for a minute and then I'll touch base with you again in a couple of minutes.

Rise. You can label a little bit more quickly, just a bit more. That will help with concentration a little bit.

You can repeat the same label again. Ankles. Feet. Whole body.

## Shinzen guides a mindfulness meditation for Pain. Part III of III. ~

### Shinzen Young

部隊全体全体 Whole body.

Forearms. OK, good. Now, I'm going to ask you a few questions. Would you say at this time that there's very much mental chatter going on, or it's more quiet in your head? Quiet.

It's pretty quiet? OK, good. Would you say at this time that you have very much mental imagery going on, or is the mental screen more in a blank state? Imagery. You have images. What sort of images do you have? It's images of your body or? My body. The body-related images? Good.

That's a very natural reaction, and once again, excellent detection. The sense that we have a body comes about through a combination of actual sensations in the body and then mental pictures of the body. So just let those mental images be there, but in the background as you focus on the actual sensations. Now, we're working with the secondary physical sensations of your chronic discomfort, chronic pain situation.

I have one other question. At this time, are there any emotional sensations associated with this? Any qualities like impatience, fear, teariness, that kind of thing? Or is your emotional body fairly peaceful? It's fairly peaceful. OK, good. If you have a lot of mental talk or emotional sensations reactive to what was going on, which can, of course, happen sometimes, that would be something else we could work with.

We could work with your feel-image-talk reactions. But right now, it seems like that that's not too much in the way. So we're going to just stay with the physicality of the body. Those secondary sensations that I'm having you focus on, do they seem more or less stable? Or are they more sort of flowing and like an energy kind of thing? Are they more like solid and particulate like thing? Would you say they're? They're pretty much solid. I'm aware of them at all times. It just shifts the awareness.

So your awareness shifts, but the sensations themselves don't particularly flow or vibrate as a kind of energy. No. OK, good. It could happen on occasion that they do. And if that does happen, that's something significant that you can focus on.

Has that ever happened in working with your body experience, that it became fluid? Yes. OK, so you know what I'm talking about. It's not happening now. It doesn't have to happen.

But if it does, that's a significant experience that I call flow. And you can go with that if you wish. OK, I'd like you to bring your attention back to the primary area, the two primary areas where we started. It's possible that those areas are exactly the same as they were before in terms of intensity, solidity, and so forth. It's also possible that there's been a change.

They might be more intense, less intense, more solid, less solid, more sort of coagulated or more thinned out. Would you say that the two secondary areas are pretty much the same as when we started? Or have they changed in some direction? Well, they've changed. Can you describe the nature of the change? I'm not even aware of them at the moment.

They've sort of vanished? They've vanished. Remember I mentioned how detecting and totally opening up to the secondary spread could sometimes dissipate the pressure from the primary? Remember I mentioned that? Well, you just experienced that. It's pretty cool, isn't it? Has that ever happened to you before like this? Not like this. Did you ever work with

the secondary sensations in this systematic way previously? OK. Well, then I would say you learned something pretty significant and in a relatively short period of time. You can open your eyes if you wish and just sort of stay with the momentum of that. That was excellent work. Any questions about that experience? The flow, when I said solid, it seemed to me then as soon as I said it, it started to flow around.

Oh, I see. Just thinking in those terms caused a fluidity. Can you still be aware of it as we're speaking? Yes, definitely. It's moving all over. Yeah, so now it's sort of turning into an energy experience.

And even the secondaries are not that uncomfortable. No. Yeah. Well, you can remember what we did, remember the strategy. Because a lot of it, remember I asked you a lot of questions? And that was in order to pick an optimal strategy to start with and based on what you told me, seemed to me, OK, we'll go with the secondaries, see what happens.

And two of the classic results, the dissipation of pressure from the primary and a sense of fluidity occurred in a relatively short period of time. So we were lucky in a sense. It doesn't always quite work that easily. Some might take hours or even days sometimes, but we sort of lucked out. But you can remember and you can replicate this on your own. You remember the sequence that we went through and you remember the categories, their definitions, and the ways of working with them.

Well, that's very cool. Any questions or other things you'd like to comment on? You got anything more? The first one's always free. There'll be a charge for the next one. That was terrific. OK, well, very good. So there you have, actually, I got to be honest, it doesn't always work this easily. But there you have a classic example of what I call an interactive algorithmic guidance. It's interactive because I took feedback, I asked questions. It's algorithmic because I was following a flowchart. In my own mind, I had a range of strategies that involve looping and branching. And depending on the kinds of answers I would have gotten, we would have gone in very different directions. If he'd had a lot of thoughts and emotions about what was going on, we probably would have started with that, et cetera, et cetera. So this will give you an idea of the approach to mindfulness that I call interactive, algorithmic, personalized coaching.

And it's my contention that this way of working is the optimal way both to teach people the skills and also to support them when they have to apply those skills to real life challenges, such as emotions or physical discomfort. So thanks, Rich. That was great.

Thank you. We got it for the record. You're beaming. I know. Excellent. Extraordinary.

Very good. Well, we don't call it the miracle of mindfulness for nothing. If you look back, you'll see that I didn't have you change anything at all. That's what's so weird about it. All I had you do was be precise, concentrated, and matter of fact. We didn't try to change anything or make anything go away. And yet, because of bringing that threefold skill set to this experience, suddenly there's a reduction of suffering and even a little bit of a pleasant kind of energy associated with it. That's the miracle of mindfulness.

## Shinzen Guides Steph in "Focus Out" (Sight, Sound, Touch)~

### Shinzen Young

The focusing out sounds interesting, so does the positive, but I think the focusing out sounds very interesting. Okay, good. So you'll remember I said that we would very carefully define terms. So external sounds we'll call sound. External sights we'll call sight. And then physical sensations in your body we'll call touch. So I'm going to describe a technique and I want you to tell me if it makes sense. If all you're aware of is touch, I'd like you to say out loud touch and focus on that for a second.

We'll call that noting. If all you're aware of is touch, note touch. If all you're aware of is sight, note sight. If all you're aware of is sound, note sound. If more than one is available, just choose one to note. Intently focus on that for a few seconds and then note again either the same thing or something else. Does that make sense? Are my eyes supposed to be open? They will be in a minute.

Oh, okay. So when you say sight you mean with the eyes open. But I wanted you to prepare with your eyes closed just to get settled. So let me just repeat. When I focus on touch I'm focusing on body sensations like sitting in the chair or clothes or just any sensation that's not emotional and that's touch.

Sight would be what I see with my eyes open and sound is sound. That's correct. Okay. Now what's going to pull you away from touch, sight, sound is your reactions to it which is feel, image, talk. Does that make sense? Yes. Or my thoughts.

Yes. Feel, image, talk could take the form of reaction to touch, sight, sound or it could go off on its own and spin memory, plan, and fantasy. So you'll be constantly pulled towards feel, image, talk.

When that happens just let go of that and focus on touch, sight, sound. It's sort of expansive concentration. The contractive world of thought and emotion pulls in and you work against that expanding out into touch, sight, sound. Does that make sense? So by expanding out you mean I'm moving what I'm aware of to the outside world? Yes.

And you're letting go of the inside world. That's good. Yeah. Right. So you're like anchoring yourself in the power of now. The touches, the sights, and the sounds are always now.

So that will weaken the gripping power of fantasy, memory, planning, and judgmentalness. So we're going to start to make it simple. I'm going to have you just do touch and sound for a second and then we'll add sight. So I'd like you to say those labels out loud.

Just when my awareness is on it I'm like... That's correct. Okay. Touch. Touch. Touch. Touch. Touch. Touch. Touch. Touch. Sound. Sound. Touch. Touch. That's perfect.

Meaning the tone of voice, the pacing, and the wording. That's exactly how to do it. And I'm aware of both at the same time but I'm just picking the one. You're selectively trying to pour your attention on just one. That's the divide and conquer, one thing at a time kind of thing. Okay good.

Now we're going to up the ante. Open your eyes and include sight. Let your eyes just do whatever they want to do.

And now you're going to have three possible things. Okay. Well, sight is big. So I'm just adding sight.



Just add that but touches and sounds may pull you in also. Sight. Sight.

Touch. Sound. Sight. Sight. Sound.

That's perfect. Instead of saying the words out loud, do it mentally. So you're just going to think the labels touch, sight, sound. You're able to do that pretty good.

Yeah. It takes all... There's not room to do anything else. It takes all your concentration just to do it. So I think you could see potentially this would pull you out of obsessive thoughts. There's no room for obsessive thoughts. And you can also see that you could do this in motion while you... You could be moving housework, even when you get good at it, talking to people.

And you could still... I'm doing it now as I'm talking to you. You're going to... Sight. And then you can think of what to say.

No, I don't... We didn't get into it, but remember I said base level of concentration, clarity? Eventually it just goes on autopilot. I'm doing it now without having to make even the mental labels, but I'm aware. Is it touch, sight, sound that I'm focusing on? I'm trying to do it too.

So that allows you... And I think you can see it builds... You feel like you're more focused, right? That's the concentration piece. It's interesting. My whole sense of being here, I realize how much my sense of who I am is really... You know, oh, that voice in my head that's telling me where to go and you're going to be late, or... It's all in here and kind of focused here. And there's something about this that makes my whole sense of what I am bigger. As my awareness moves out there, and like I said, it doesn't leave room for my chatter, my incessant chatter in my head. It takes a break. I'm not aware of it until afterwards.

And obviously it's activated now again as I talk, but... Yeah. That's the general idea. Great. There you go.

## Shinzen Weeps at Beauty of Japanese Children's Poem

Because, just as you had to learn the ABCs, every Japanese child has to learn the Iroha. The Iroha is the traditional ordering of the Japanese script. Hiragana, are you aware that Japanese language is written in a combination of kanji, which are Chinese characters, and kana, which are Japanese syllables, syllabary.

There's two kinds of kana, but the one that's normally used is called Hiragana. The way that school children learn Hiragana is they learn a poem. A poem that contains each syllable of the Japanese language once and only once. And that poem is traditionally ascribed to Kobo Daishi, also known as Kukai.

And Kukai was the person who introduced Shingon into Japan from China. And he developed his linguistic sophistication because he studied a little Sanskrit. And the Sanskrit, Panini and such, he was, the people in India invented grammar, really. The world's first scientific grammarian was Panini. And because Shingon uses mantras a lot, and so they wanted to know Sanskrit, so they actually learned phonological principles.

They meaning the monks, the Shingon monks. And they learned it based on Indic notions of linguistics. So there was an indirect impact all the way from India, all the way to Japan, when the Japanese written language was first sort of developing in the Heian period. It was Shingon monks that did it because they had linguistic sophistication.

They created the equivalent of their alphabet. And so whereas you learn the ABCs, a Japanese child learns this poem. Iro wa nioedo, chirinuru wo, wagayo tarezo tsunemaru, ui no okuyaba kyo koete, asaki yume michi e mo sezu.

That contains each syllable of the Japanese language exactly once. And then you memorize that poem, and you learn the kana that way. And that's the direct influence of Shingon on the Japanese language, which is absolutely indelible.

Every Japanese person knows it. So what does the poem mean? It's very interesting. Iro means color, Iro wa nioedo, although the colors are bright, chirinuru wo, the flower will eventually fall to the ground.

Wagayo, in this world of ours, tarezo, who, tsunemaru, can expect to live forever. Ui no okuyaba. Ui is the name of, this is really incredibly beautiful.

Ui is the name of a place, but it's a pun also. Ui no okuyaba, maybe you know what yama means in Japanese. What does it mean? Mountain. Okuyama means furthest mountains.

So ui no okuyama kyo koete. Today I crossed over the furthest mountain of ui, but it's a pun because ui also means sanskrita dharma, as a technical term in Buddhism. Sanskrita dharma is compounded things. You've probably heard this, okay? Things that arise due to causality, anything other than nirvana is a compounded thing. So ui no okuyama, today, ui no okuyama kyo koete, today crossing the farthest mountain of the village of ui, asaki yume miji, no longer will I be subject to superficial dreams, ei moesu, nor will I be intoxicated anymore.

It's a whole talk about impermanence and enlightenment. That's how every Japanese child learns their alphabet, to this day. Little if your culture. You don't want to know what I know. So ui no okuyama kyo koete, asaki yume miji, ei moesu.

## Shinzen Young describes Mindfulness Meditation - as only he can.

Meditation and the Other The way you teach meditation is different than how other people teach. Right now, you've said things that I've not heard from other teachers about focusing on all these different places. I've heard people talk about focusing on the breath and a few things that I said before, but you've now brought up all these different objects of meditation. Is that how what you teach is different than what others teach? If I were to describe...

I think first I'd want to emphasize how what I teach is similar to what the other people teach. But of course, there's lumpers and there's splitters, right? The world is expansion and contraction. Am I asking you to split or lump? Well, you asked me to split, but I would prefer to initially lump, and then I'll split. So I would say that... Well, I teach people to elevate their base level of concentration. So from that perspective, I would be identical to any other competent meditation teacher. I work within the mindfulness tradition. Mindfulness can be called a kind of meditation, if you want to, in that one of the things that it does is dramatically elevate your base level of concentration. But mindfulness has two other components. Mindful awareness has... I think of mindful awareness as a threefold attentional skill set.

So one of the components we've already talked about at some length, that's your base level of concentration power, which I define as the ability to focus on what is deemed relevant at any given moment. However, in addition to that, which any form of meditation, mindful meditation, or Christian Centering Prayer, or TM, they would all achieve that. Mindfulness, in addition to that, has two other components or features that are strongly emphasized and are distinctive to it. One I call sensory clarity, which you can think of as the ability to keep track of the components of your sensory experience.

For example, to make that tangible, when you're having an emotional experience, what part of that emotion is mental image? What part of that emotion is internal talk? And what part of that emotion is emotional feelings in your body? To keep track of the feel-image-talk components of emotion specifically and subjective experience in general, that would be an example of sensory clarity. Or to know when you have an external sound. The sound is one thing, but your feel-image-talk reactions to the sound are something else. And it's those feel-image-talk reactions that create the sense of an eye listening to an it called the sound. To be able to keep track of what part is sound, what part is my reaction, what part is sight, what part is my reaction. Things like that are what I call sensory clarity. And just as we give people exercises that specifically develop their concentration power, we also give people exercises that develop their sensory clarity. So that's sort of distinctive to the mindfulness tradition. Then another thing that's distinctive to the mindfulness tradition is a conscious development of what we call equanimity, which is a little bit of a strange word. It's not ordinarily used.

And in fact, that's why we use it. To be strange? Not to create an aura of mystical schmistical, but to give people a heads up, hey, this is a technical term, and it means something very specific, and it's defined in a certain way. So equanimity sounds like being cooled out and detached, but actually, as we would define it in the mindfulness tradition, it's radical non-interference with the natural flow of sensory experience. So if you have emotions in the body, you don't push them down, but you don't latch on to them inappropriately either. It's a sort of non-pushing and pulling, a hands-off with regards to the flow of your senses, which does not for a moment imply a hands-off with regards to the

flow of events in the world. You can be very proactive and even pushy with regards to circumstances and conditions, but equanimity means that you're not pushing and pulling on the natural operation of your senses, your senses defined as external sight, external sound, physical type body sensations, your mental images, your internal talk, and your emotional body sensations. You let touch, sight, sound, feel, image, talk, expand and contract as they wish without interference. Let me just make sure I get that right. So equanimity is my experience, thoughts and feelings, and body sensation, and how I'm experiencing the world in terms of sight and sound. I'm just letting that happen and watching that kind of flow, I don't know, like waves or something, but that's separate from my wanting to do an action in the world to change things.

Yes. In other words, as you become passive in a sense, with regards to, in the sense that you're passive in the sense that you don't fight yourself. You train, another way to look at equanimity is it's training your sensory circuits not to interfere with themselves. So you could compare it to, if your sensory experience is the engine of a car, equanimity is oiling the engine so the parts don't grind against each other. And that's being in the Tao or that's that flow that we're going for? It can lead to an experience of fluidity, but sometimes it can lead to an experience of solidity because you're willing to let things melt and freeze. There's another TS, this is going to be TS Eliot time, there's another TS Eliot line, midwinter spring is its own season, between melting and freezing the soul's sap quivers.

You have to be willing to melt and freeze. The equanimity is equanimity with whatever form the senses take. But what equanimity does is, it's a skill. Yeah, so it's, another way to look at it is it's learning to love every sensory experience as it arises, but not to hold on to it inappropriately as it passes. How do you develop that skill? I'd like that one.

Everyone would, because... That's a good skill. Equanimity. Let's all have some equanimity.

I concur. And why it's a good skill is, you'll discover that when you have equanimity with pain, it still hurts, but it doesn't bother you. And when you have equanimity with pleasure, it not only feels good, it satisfies you. People think they want to be free from pain and to have pleasure, but what they really want is to be free from pain being a problem and to have pleasure that gives satisfaction.

And it turns out that the quality of equanimity does that. So when you say, yeah, I'd like... It's like that joke, I'd like to have what she's having.

What she's having, yeah, I've heard some of that. That's right. The equanimity is definitely something. And how do you... Desirable. Highly desirable. In fact, more than desirable, maybe absolutely essential. If you have some physical and or emotional pain that cannot be gotten rid of by changing circumstances or by analgesia or psychotropics or whatever, then you've got a choice of either developing equanimity or being mired in abject suffering. So definitely, equanimity is not only desirable, but maybe pivotal to making life worth living under certain circumstances.

## Shinzen Young explains "A" in a Whole New Way

So, I wanted you to see my favorite t-shirt. I don't know if you can really see it all that good. I have a whole blog about this. It's hard to miss, really. Essentially, it's this concept. A, big A inside a circle.

So, you know where I got this t-shirt? So, this is crew swag from the Avengers movie. This gave me a lot of geek cred at the Buddhist Geeks a couple years ago. You may remember their first meeting. I was the keynote speaker. I wore this during the conference because the movie hadn't come out yet.

So, that's what gave me the geek cred. I had stuff from the movie before it was available to the public. So, I was over at their place and he had all this crew swag. He said, you can take whatever you want. And this immediately jumped out. So, you may or may not have an idea of why. But take a look.

It's A, first letter of the alphabet, inside a circle. So, does that set off any possible associations, Buddhist-wise? Good guess. Not completely unrelated. Well, the circle, called *ensō*, you can look it up on Wikipedia. The circle is used a lot in Zen for the obvious symbolism of fullness that is also empty. For example, in Soto Zen, and actually some *Renzai* also, when you sit, you sit with this mudra, this circular mudra. This is called the *Dharmadhatu Samadhi Mudra*.

I love the name. *Dharmadhatu* means the realm of the dharma, the realm of the absolute. *Samadhi* is *samadhi*, in this case concentration, and *mudra* is a hand gesture. So, this is sort of like the cosmic *samadhi* hand gesture. So, I saw the circle immediately and its associations and its meanings.

But what really jumped out was the letter A in the middle of it. It reminded me of something from the school of my original ordination, which is Japanese *Shingon*. *Shingon* is Japanese *Vajrayana* practice. And as you no doubt know, visualizations are a fairly central part, both in the Tibetan versions of *Vajrayana* and in the Japanese version.

And there is a practice that is done not only by the monks, but by householders, the average lay people in Japan that are associated with the *Shingon* school. They're taught this very simple visualization called *Ajikan*. So, *kan* means a visualization. It's the same *kan* as in *kanzeon*, so it means contemplate. Actually, *kanzeon* means see the world's sounds.

But by extension, contemplate and so forth. So, that's this *kan* character. *Ji* is the same as in *kanji*. It means a character. So, what does A mean? Well, A is not just the first letter in the English alphabet. One version or another of it is the first letter in the Greek alphabet, *alpha*. It's also the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet, *aleph*, which pretty much sounds like *alpha*, and that's no coincidence. And it's also the first letter in all of the alphabets of India, specifically *Devanagari*, which is the Sanskrit alphabet used in North India. A is the first letter.

So, this is not a coincidence. The alphabet is one of the most extraordinary cases of cultural diffusion known to anthropology. It was invented once.

There actually is just one alphabet. It was invented once about 1000 BC in what's now Lebanon, essentially, which was the center of Phoenician culture. And the Phoenicians were sort of the northern cousins of the Israelites, essentially the same language, Biblical Hebrew. Phoenicians are very similar to that. So, they invented this alphabet, *alephbet*, *gimel*, *dauid*, *hevav*, *zion*, in the Hebrew order.

And that diffused. The Greeks picked it up from the Phoenicians. The Etruscans picked it up from the Greeks. The Romans picked it up from the Etruscans. And we, English speakers, picked it up from the Romans.

So, it went west, but it also went east. As the Aramaic script, which is what's used to write Hebrew now, that's actually Aramit, that's actually an Aramaic version of the alphabet, derived from the Phoenician. And then it spread and became the Arabic alphabet, used all over the Islamic world. It spread further east. Aramaic script was introduced into the eastern part of the empire of Alexander the Great during the Hellenistic period, and was modified and became Devanagari, the alphabet used for Sanskrit. That spread down into South India.

And the cultures influenced by India through Buddhism, Tibet. In fact, if you sort of squint your eyes and look at Tibetan, and you squint your eyes and look at Hebrew, it's sort of similar. That's not a coincidence. That's totally amazing.

That is not a coincidence. The Tibetan script is derived from a form of Devanagari. Devanagari is derived from essentially the same alphabet used to write Hebrew. Both go back to the Phoenician, but it gets more interesting.

It spreads even further. So, because mantras are important in Vajrayana practice, you visualize the letters, you chant the letters. So, when the Japanese picked up Vajrayana, with it came a knowledge of how to write Sanskrit in an Indic alphabet. Now, they write with a brush, but they write the letters of a modified form of Devanagari called Siddham alphabet. So, to this day, monks in my school learn how to write the mantras in the actual Indic script, not relying on kanji or Chinese characters or kana.

So, that means that all the way from Japan in the east to England and Wales in the west, that single alphabet spread, diffused. So, the first letter of the alphabet is A or Aleph or A. And in the Sanskrit language, as in the Greek language, A or An, it's the same thing, is negation. It's the negation, right? Symmetry, symmetric, asymmetric. Think of any Greek word and the opposite of it, the negation of it will have an A. What are some other examples? Typical, atypical.

Great. What are some other examples? Something else? We use that one? Atheistic. Without Theos, without God. So, the letter A is the great negator. So, the contemplation of the letter A is used to, not at first to develop, of course, concentration power through visualization, but then to lead you to the insight of the great negation. What is the great negation? Well, the unborn state.

And what is the unborn state? Well, you've all meditated on it many, many times with my system. Gone. Okay? So, A stands for gone. As the source of all things. The great, the rich nothingness, the nada, the nihil, the nihil par excellence, the nothing par excellence. Whence our sensory experience arises and whither it returns, moment by moment, whether we notice that or not, and as we notice it more and more, we're called more and more enlightened. So, it immediately jumped out to me that, wow, this is a really cool t-shirt. Because it's got both the ensoul, which is sort of like the Zen symbol for the rich nothingness, and it's got the ah, the alpha privative, it's called.

The A that negates, symbolizing the primordial state of the unbornness. Aji honkusho, they say in Japanese. The character ah points to the original face. They don't use that phrase, but the un, before your parents were born, you know, the Zen expression. Before your parents were born, before your parents were born, right? Before expansion and contraction separated, you had a face. What was it? Well, it would be the face of zero now, wouldn't it? The primordial unborn. So, I thought, there's a lot of Buddhist meaning in the Avengers movie. So, that was the piece of crew swag that I grabbed.

## Shinzen Young tells Stories of Yes & No

So, there was a famous master in the Tang Dynasty that in Chinese is called Zhao Zhou.

His name is Zhao Zhou. East Asia is a little confusing, you know, because there's four ways to pronounce every kanji, every Chinese character. There's the Chinese way, and actually it varies depending on the part of China. Then there's a Sino-Japanese, a Sino-Korean, and a Sino-Vietnamese. So if you want to look up Zen masters, sometimes you find the name under the Japanese pronunciation, sometime under the Chinese. So Zhao Zhou in Japanese is pronounced Zhou Shu. A lot of people think, oh, that's the same as Sasaki, Zhou Shu, my teacher, but it's written with completely different characters.

Just happened to sound the same in Japanese. So Zhao Zhou, or Zhou Shu in Japanese pronunciation, was actually one of the major Zen masters of the late Tang Dynasty. He was a disciple of Master Nantran. That's Nansen in Japanese pronunciation. And Nantran was a disciple of one of the founders of Zen, Maazu, called Baso in Japanese. Nantran is famous for a rather horrific piece of behavior if you were to take things literally. But you know, these Zen stories, you cannot take literally, right? Remember they point, but they also hook. The whole idea is to see what they point to, but not allow your fixations to get hooked by things.

So because when you hear this story, it's like, what? So I don't know if this story actually happened, okay? It's a little hard to imagine that it actually did happen, but it does point to something. So this story involves Nantran, Nansen in Japanese pronunciation, and Zhao Zhou. Zhao Zhou was Nantran's disciple. So Zhao Zhou was out, and a dispute developed among Nantran's students. The way that the temples were organized in those days is that there was an Eastern Hall and a Western Hall.

So the monks in the Eastern Hall and in the Western Hall got into an argument about who owned a cat. This is pretty typical of the tempest and the teapot kind of stuff that we humans are subject to. You may have noticed things like this happening sometimes.

Little things become big things. You may have noticed it during this retreat. We call it yogi mind, right? We're all yogis in the Buddhist sense of the word yogi.

It doesn't mean someone that can bend into a pretzel. It means meditators are called yogis, we're yogis. So the sort of weird things that start to happen where you get little idiosyncrasies of your fellow meditators become sins crying out to heaven for vengeance. You notice someone and you haven't talked to them or anything, but you have this entire scenario of how you found your spiritual soulmate. This whole thing unfolds and then when you finally break silence and talk to them for about three minutes it's like, what was I thinking? I don't even want to talk to this person anymore.

So these kinds of sort of inflations of little things, we learn to work with them. I highly recommend the poem by Robert Browning called Soliloquy of a Spanish Cloister. If you want to see yogi mind to its max, it's just a brilliant piece of work. How these monks, this one monk in specific, is just lost in these petty rages. So east or west, it's the same. This kind of stuff happens. So the east and the west monks were having this dispute over who owns the cat.

So Master Nantran heard the commotion, came out and grabbed the cat, held it up with a knife in another hand. Okay now don't get hooked on this. See what I mean? Okay. I'll take it too literally. There's something being pointed to that's really important. And he said, if any of you can say a word, it will save the cat. Otherwise I'm going to cut it in two. And they were all fixated in confusion and doubt.

So he cut the cat in two, supposedly. Now I'll give you a heads up. This is leading to a co-op. You're going to be asked a question. Shall I give you a hint even before I ask the question? How about that? I will give you a hint. I will tell you, at least in my interpretation, what the answer to the koan is.

But maybe not as well. Yes. The answer to the koan is on my t-shirt. So this is like Jeopardy, okay? So what's the question? The answer is on my t-shirt. If you remember what I said about what this means.

Okay. So then what's the question? So when Zhao Zhou returned, Nanquan told him the story of what had happened during the day. At which point, Zhao Zhou took off his sandals, put them on top of his head, and walked out. To which Nanquan said, Zhao Zhou could have saved the cat.

So the koan is, why? Why was Zhao Zhou the person that could have saved the cat? What do you think? Are you fixated in confusion? There's nothing wrong with being confused. In fact, being confused is really good. Being coagulating when you're confused, not good. The goal is not to avoid confusion, doubt, disorientation. The goal is not to avoid don't know.

The goal is to avoid the habitual coagulation around don't know. Uncoagulated don't know is called spontaneity when it comes out of your body, and wisdom when it turns in your mind. I repeat, uncoagulated don't know is dynamic spontaneity when it comes out of your body, and wisdom when it turns in your mind. So remember the story? Nanquan asked the monks to turn a word, to say something, to manifest, and they were coagulated in don't know. So they couldn't say anything. So they lost the cat.

Zhao Zhou had an immediate response, no fixation whatsoever. But what did it mean? It doesn't mean to put your sandals on your head, the part that's underneath is now on top. Then where are you? And the person that lives there, there, it would be the kind of person who could save the cat. Zen master Wumad, commenting on Zhao Zhou's activity, said something to the effect of he grabbed the knife away from Nanquan, and now Nanquan is begging for his life.

Praised him that highly. So you don't understand, right? Or maybe some of you do. So not understanding is fine.

It's good, as long as you're working through the habitual tendencies to coagulate as soon as don't know arises. It was a brilliant way to symbolize, without having to use words, what it means to live below the arising of the world, to live below what is born, to live in zero. The ultimate humility.

Such a person could save the cat. So Zhao Zhou is famous for his own koan, maybe one of the most famous koans in the whole history of Zen, and one that Sasaki Roshi talks about a lot. Thank God, otherwise I wouldn't know how to discuss it for you. I've got the cliff notes from an actual master. It relates to exactly the same thing.

It's about exactly the same thing, but from a little different perspective. So Zhao Zhou lived in the Tang Dynasty, and the Tang Dynasty was roughly, very roughly 600 to 900 AD. It's the golden age of Chinese culture.

Interesting sort of corresponds to really the darkest period of European history. But that was the golden age of Chinese culture. Buddhism came into China before that considerably. Buddhism came into China in the Han Dynasty. Han Dynasty is about 200 BC to 280, so it roughly straddles the beginning of the Christian era. Or, you can think of the Han Dynasty as corresponding roughly to the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire.

So the Roman period, that 400 years, approximately 200 on either side of the time of Jesus. That was Han in China, and Rome was ruling in the Western world. It was then that



Buddhism came into China as a kooky foreign cult from India. So Tang Dynasty is much later, 600, 700 years later. It took that many centuries for this kooky foreign cult from India to be fully metabolized into a form that was comfortable for the Chinese, meaning an expression of enlightenment that fit the Chinese culture. And that's Chan, or Zen. So these masters from the Tang Dynasty, Ma Zi, Nan Quan, Zhao Zhou, that was from that period. It took all those hundreds of years, sort of interesting because I think it's only going to take not even 100 years for something similar to happen in the West.

But then things move much faster now. So Northern Chinese to this day call themselves Hanran, which you even see it on the internet, Han Chinese. That means as opposed to other ethnic groups that are in China. But people from South China, Tongyan, right? Like from Hong Kong, Canton, they call themselves Tang people. I guess because why? Maybe it was that, I don't know, but in South China they usually, am I correct, usually use Tang instead of Han? I think it's just a later, right? Yeah, it's just a time period.

For whatever reason. So the way Chinese was pronounced in the Tang Dynasty is preserved in South China. Whereas the Mandarin which is spoken in North China has gone through a lot of modifications because North China is where all the, well there's just a lot of reasons that the language changed up there. So this is a famous story. I'm going to say it in Mandarin. It's a story about Zhao Zhou. But then I asked Philip to say it in Cantonese so you can be able to hear it the way Zhao Zhou would have said it and heard it. It's a very different feeling tone to the language.

So here's the, and then I will translate also into English. So Zhao Zhou He Shang Yin Seng Wan Gou Zi Huan You Fo Xin Yan Wu Zhou Yun Wu. So that's the story in modern Mandarin pronunciation. So Zhao Zhou He Shang, so Master Zhao Zhou Yin Seng Wan happened to be asked by a monk. A monk asked Master Zhao Zhou.

Gou Zi Huan You Fo Xin Yan Wu. Gou Zi means a dog, a puppy. Apparently as they were talking this little puppy was walking around or something. So the monk pointed to the puppy and said, Gou Zi Huan You Fo Xin Yan Wu. Does the dog have Fo Xin, the Buddha nature, Yan Wu or not? So You means have, Wu means not have.

Now Ye makes it an exclusive or. Yes or no. Does the dog have the Buddha nature? So that's the part you have to appreciate about this koan is that the monk is setting a track for Master Zhao Zhou.

Yes or no, exclusive or. So literally in Chinese it's dog, have, Buddha nature or no, not have. But there's a little different language feeling to it if you hear it in the way it probably would have sounded to Zhao Zhou.

So why don't you manifest that. This is the Cantonese pronunciation. Zhao Zhou He Shang Yin Zheng Wen Gou Zi Huan You Fo Xin Yan Wu Zhou Yun Mu. So You Mu. Sounds a little bit more like the English yes, no.

That's why I like it in the Cantonese pronunciation. Yes or no. Does the dog have the Buddha nature? Yao, Mu. What do you think? What's the right answer? Shall I give you a hint? The right answer depends. Depends on the context.

There's several right answers, but those right answers are also wrong answers in a different context. So let's start with the context of traditional Buddhism. From the viewpoint of early Theravada Buddhism, does the dog have a Buddha nature? No. Only a human being can become a Buddha. Animals are too stupid and gods are too blissed out. The condition that's in between animals and gods is the human condition.

Smart enough to figure things out, but uncomfortable enough to be motivated to do something about it. So early Buddhist idea is human life is very special because only the human life has the right mixture of intelligence, pleasure, and pain to clue a person in to the

need for enlightenment. So from that point of view, scholastically, the answer is no. Dog doesn't have a Buddha nature. So that's Hinayana, that small vehicle point of view. However from the Mahayana point of view, it is a philosophical item of belief that everything has the Buddha nature. So the Buddha nature. The actual characters in Chinese would be written this way.

I don't know how much you can see it. This is Fo, it's pronounced Fo in Mandarin, but it would have been pronounced something like Boot a long time ago. So that's from Buddha. So this means Buddha. But the interesting character is this one. This means, this side of the character means to be born and this is heart or mind.

So your nature is the consciousness or mind or heart that you're originally born with. So this word, it's pronounced Sho in Japanese, Shi in Mandarin Chinese. This is a very important word in East Asian Buddhism. Enlightenment, initial enlightenment, what roughly corresponds to stream entry in Southeast Asian Buddhism, is often referred to in Japanese as Kensho. Ken means to see and sho means nature.

When you see your nature. But what's interesting is that there's another character, Gen, which is very related to Ken. They're actually the same word in archaic Chinese. And Gen means to manifest. So Ken is the I see it. Gen is the it manifests, but they're actually the same word. So the Zen teacher that I studied with, several of them actually, said that Kensho, or to see your nature, is really Gensho. It's to manifest your nature. So what is your nature? Well, your nature is the, there's only one nature. It's the Buddha nature. So how would a teacher interpret the Buddha nature? Well, you know how one teacher interprets it, the activity of expansion, contraction. And that's the interpretation we're going to use here.

That's the one I'm familiar with. So from the viewpoint of Mahayana, does the dog have the Buddha nature? The answer is yes. Scholastically speaking, the answer is yes. So these are the answers that are correct from an intellectual point of view. But you can be sure that the monk who was trying to set a trap for Zhaozhou was not asking what's the Theravada party line on dog and Buddha nature, or what's the Mahayana party line on dog or Buddha nature. The monk was no doubt testing the master's ability not to explain, as I just did, the answer, but to manifest the answer. So if you were master Zhaozhou and someone set a trap for you that you recognized by asking you an exclusive or question, okay? Yao, mo, yes or no? Dog have Buddha nature. What are you going to say? Good. That would definitely be an acceptable answer.

But maybe a little bit more? Go ahead. Manifest. That would be an acceptable answer. Now let's go back to intellectual. The problem with the question was the exclusive or. So the answer would be to not get caught in the dichotomy of the exclusive or. So the answer that we just gave, going back now to intellectual for a minute, was that what was that answer in terms of yes and yes, no? It's not yes. It's not no. Is it both or is it neither? Can that happen with just yes or just no? It takes yes and no, right, to mold anything, to manifest any appearance. Takes an interplay of yes and no. So that was the answer both, okay? You're expanding and contracting, doing the doing called dog.

Yes, mixing yes and no to manifest the activity called dog. So that's a good answer. But that's not the one that Joshu gave. Yau? Mo. Okay. Joshu said mo, no, no. So Joshu's no. Is it really no? Or is it the closest... If you live in a culture that does not have zero as a number, then the closest thing that you can have to that which is neither positive nor negative, the only thing that you can do that's beyond yes and no, if you have to choose either yes or no to express that which is neither yes nor no, neither movement from nor towards, neither plus nor minus, neither expansion nor contraction. Well if you had to do one or the other, zero is more like no than it is like yes. Especially if you say it in a certain way, okay? So the answer to this koan is in how you say the word no. If you say the word no in a way that cancels yes and no, which you can actually hear in the archaic Chinese. In Japanese it's mu.

Okay. And in Cantonese, mo. So then it's zero. The answer is zero. The answer is that which precedes the manifestation of the dog and that which follows the manifestation of the dog. Except for the point, the still point, there would be no dance and there is only the dance. T.S.

Eliot. So the both, the polarization of yes and no to make a dog or a flower or a life or a planet, that is preceded by and followed by what is beyond yes and no. So they're inseparable. You could, it would have been a correct answer to separate yes and no and manifest dog in between. But it's equally a correct answer to bring yes and no together because that's what's before the both and that's what's after the both.

So it's a cycle. Either the big no, the zero, the aji hongpushode, the alpha privative of the unborn, the place where Zhao Zhou acted from, symbolized by having, being below his sandals, below the earth, below what is born. That place is half of what you need to know to be enlightened and the other half is when it's yes and no, dancing together.

No yes, no no, which is sort of the no with the big capital no. The way I personally like to point people to this, just my own style, because I like a system, is well the place where things come from, the zero, the source, is the place that they go to. So you can train yourself gradually, systematically to start to notice when things disappear. And the sensitivity develops over time until you finally see what happens, why things disappear.

The reason things disappear is that the forces, the polar forces that mold them cancel and then they repolarize and then they cancel. It's a cycle. There's another way, well there's many other ways to come to this same knowledge. One of the most powerful ways is called self-inquiry. It's the flip side of just not God, just the reversal. In that practice you're constantly trying to look over your shoulder and see where the moment arose from, the unborn whence things are born. So you're turning 180 degrees, turning consciousness back on itself, asking who am I, what is this? Not as an intellectual question, but as an observing. So in that case A has arisen and you ask where did A come from? In this other practice, which I like because I can make it systematic and I can gradually train people to do it, there's no gradual training for self-inquiry, you just do it. There's no algorithm, you just do it.

The instruction is always the same. You go to the teacher and it's just like, well where did that come from? So that can be very powerful, but since I like algorithms and systems and let's see what's coming up with people and whatever, I like something that I can teach step by step. So I sort of approach it from the other side, let's see where things go to. But it's the same process, the same process. So in the just not gone approach, A has arisen and now let's stay with A until we notice the instant that A vanishes. The instant that A vanishes is also the instant that B arises, the very instant. What is B? B is whatever came after A.

So if you want to be truly at the absolute now whence something arises, just watch something pass and then you'll be, either nothing will happen, which case you're in chow-chow, or something will happen and you'll notice it coming from nothing. Yes and no, my two favorite words. Really? When I ask someone a question, if they just say yes or just say no, without any modifications, that's nice.

But usually there's modifications. So as a parting gift, I'm going to slip you the secret. How's that sound? I'm going to slip you the secret with regards to yes and no. The goal is to have a clear and deep experience of no.

## Shinzen Young's "CHART of HUMAN HAPPINESS"

Okay, so the human condition, humanity in general, each one of us in specific, can be iconically represented this way. There's a lot of information stored in this.

As far as I can see, everything that's significant for an individual or for us collectively is iconically represented here. So what you do is you draw a circle and then you draw two intersecting triangles, and you draw a couple more circles and a dot, and then we're going to make this into a life saver, spiritual life saver. And six compartments. And you draw an I, U-I-E, C, here, here, feel, the three sense modalities.

There's inner activation for each one of these. See in, see in right here, that's your mental images. Hear in, this is your mental talk. Feel in, this is your emotional body. But there's also the physical senses, see out, the physical world here. Hear out, hear the sounds of the world, feel out the physical impact of your body. So you have the inner and outer visual, somatic, and auditory arisings. These are our ordinary sensory experiences that create the sense of self on the inside and physical world on the outside. And then from the viewpoint of psychospiritual growth, there are certain special states that are significant. Physical states, and there's visual, auditory, and somatic rest. Flow states, visual, auditory, somatic flow. And within the subjective activation, there's a particular proper subset of positive images, positive mental talk, and pleasant positive emotions. The subset of our inner activation that relates to our human goodness is very important. So that's positive.

So see, hear, feel, in, out, rest, flow. Good. To go. To are the two sides of the spiritual source. And go, or gone, is what happens when those two sides come together and you have to get a complete source. But when there's complete source, there's no self or world. So the source breaks apart, and in the cleft is born the self and world, at least as we experience it sensorially here.

Jewish mysticism has a whole thing about tzitzum, how chesed and tvura, the allowing half of God and the limiting half of God, pull apart and create this cleft, wherein the world arises. Very, very interesting paradigm, and something we can actually experience. So this is the world of sensory experience.

Beyond the images, the mental talk, and the emotional body, beneath it is our subconscious mind, which is, as far as I can tell, a vast world of connectivity. Now in the objective world, we have behaviors, indicated by little feet, how we walk. And they basically come in three flavors, good behavior, bad behavior, and ethically neutral behavior. This tends to be linked with three objective situations in the world, desirable situations, undesirable situations, and sort of neutral situations. So this is the law of karma.

I don't know that it's an exact accountancy across lifetimes, but certainly there are general tendencies. What goes around comes around. And I think it's important to be aware that actions have consequences. Beyond our personal world of our personal behaviors and our personal situations is the real world, whatever that is. Not sure.

I can give you a conjecture what the real world is. I'm sorry. Do it.

I will. But it's just my conjecture. This I know for sure.

I have absolute confidence that this works the way it works. But this is the world of sensory experience. The real world, in my conjecture, is sort of like the subconscious. It's a vast realm of connectivity. And you can certainly, in your meditation practice, get the sense that when this collapses, the inner world of connectivity and the outer world of connectivity merge.

That's a whole other paradigm for enlightenment. Ichinen sanzen. Can you see it, Philip? Oops.

Ichinen sanzen. One mind moment contains 3,000 worlds. Actually, 3,000 world systems.

OK. So that's the tientai in China. A whole other paradigm for enlightenment, completely unknown in the West.

Died out in China, too, 1,000 years ago. But someone had an enlightenment based on the experience of this merging with this. And another guy, also, the Huayan school, very similar notion. Huayan has influenced the modern Vietnamese master Thich Nhat Hanh. When he talks about inner being, that's directly from the Huayan tradition. And that's based on an appreciation of the similarity between these two things.

But anyway, that's a whole other deal. I like to work here. When you want to help someone, this is also useful to keep in mind. How do you help someone? Well, you want to get a sense of their whole situation. Now, you may not be able to do something about a lot of their situation. But it's useful, I think, to have a sense of the whole situation. So when I am in a position to help someone, I figure out what their sensory challenges are. Like maybe they have pain.

OK. But I know if they have physical pain as an issue, then I know that they probably have image talk and emotional reactions to that. So they've got a sort of sensory challenge. But I also think about, well, are there behavior changes they need to make? Is there something that they need to change about their objective situation, if possible? Et cetera, et cetera.

So I use this as a sort of matrix to remind me how to organize a plan, a plan to help that person improve their life. So I think of the sensory challenges. I think of the behavioral challenges.

I think of the situational challenges. And then I think of the various mindfulness approaches, the focus options that can work with those. And so that gives me a framework for suggesting a treatment plan, so to speak. So let's look at what that treatment plan is in the most general framework. In the most general framework, we could say that the goal of mindfulness practice is total human happiness.

I have an icon for that, a square smiley face. So in order to understand total human happiness, we have to understand surface happiness, and we have to understand what I call deep happiness. Now, total human happiness consists of surface happiness for yourself, deep happiness for yourself, helping others to achieve surface happiness, and helping others to achieve deep happiness. If you're doing all four of those, then, or in some way fostering all four of those, then I say you are experiencing total or complete human happiness. Now, what most people call happiness is what I would call surface happiness for themselves. If you ask most people, you know, what will make you happy? They'll talk about something that comes under, it's only a very small part of what I would call happiness. It's legitimate, but I would call it surface happiness for the individual.

And here is surface happiness for the individual represented iconically. So this is what people think they want, and which they actually do want, and legitimately. It's legitimate to want all this. But what people really want is over here, and it's sort of related, this is deep happiness. And if you can have what you think you want and what you really want, then you personally are very happy. But not totally happy, because when you have what you really want, as you'll see in a minute, you realize that it's related to what I was saying before, you realize that you is bigger than just one mind and body.

So, okay, with respect to the body, well, no, actually let's start down here. You ask the average person, what's happiness for you? They're going to probably answer in this domain, they're going to probably answer down here. So this is like the sun's coming up, right, and

this is like rain and lightning and bad weather. So most people are going to give you circumstances, objective conditions, that, okay, if I have this, this, and this, I'm going to be happy, and they're going to name perhaps some objective conditions, which if I can avoid this, this, and this, then I'll also be happy. So I have the job I want, I have the relationship I want, I have the health situation I want, I have the financial situation I want, the right people are in power in the government where I live, etc., etc. These are all conditions and then I'll be happy.

Also, we want to elevate sort of the shiny weather, and I am able to avoid health problems, and I'm able to avoid financial problems, and the people in my life are not behaving in a way that I dislike, etc., etc., then I'll be happy. I think you get the general idea. It's a litany of, remember our picture of the human condition? It's a litany of this. I want these good situations, I want to avoid these bad situations. So that's what most people will call happiness. But if you look a little more deeply, objective situations, the reason they make us happy is because of sensory experiences.

If I am a success in a way that I want to be a success, what does that really mean? That means I get to have the pleasant sensations of people telling me how great I am. A lot. I know I'm going to have that day after day. Okay, so knowing that, every time I think that thought, that's a mental image, and a mental talk, and then I get a smiley sensation, and every time somebody tells me how great I am, I get a smiley sensation. So the reason I want to be a success is so that I can have certain pleasant emotional sensations in my body on demand.

A lot of the time, any time I want to think a certain thought, it feels good in my body, etc., etc. So really, in the end, situations are desirable because they're desirable if they give us certain sensory experiences. They're undesirable if they give us an opposite sensory experience. So what does the body think it wants? It thinks it wants to elevate pleasant physical sensations and pleasant emotional sensations.

And it does, and that's fine. And what it wants to avoid is unpleasant physical and unpleasant emotional sensations. What does the mind want? The mind wants answers to this or that. And it wants to avoid don't know.

So that's all good. But what does the body really want? Something like pleasure, but subtly different. I call it fulfillment or satisfaction. What is it? It's pleasure multiplied by concentration, clarity, and equanimity. It's the degree to which the body has been trained to have complete experience of pleasure, or a mindful experience of pleasure.

Those two phrases mean exactly the same thing in my way of thinking. So we think we want intensity, variety, and duration of pleasure, physical and emotional in the body. And we do want that, but what we really want is satisfaction from that pleasure.

And that turns out to be not just a function of the pleasure, but a function of mindful awareness. We think we want to avoid discomfort in the body, and that's true and legitimate. But what we really want is to avoid suffering.

And it turns out that physical or emotional discomfort is only... What turns it into suffering is lack of mindfulness. So fulfillment equals pleasure multiplied by mindful awareness. And suffering equals discomfort divided by mindful awareness. As the mindful awareness gets smaller, the suffering gets larger.

Okay. What the mind on the surface wants is answers to a lot of things on the outside. What the mind in the deep sense wants is the answer, what am I? See here? Here the light beams are pointing to lots of things on the outside.

Here the light is shining back on its own origin, seeing what it's always been plugged into. This is called enlightenment or wisdom. And actually what we need to avoid is not so much

don't know mind. In fact, we can't avoid don't know mind.

Sooner or later, don't know mind gets us. First of all, every answer that you get generates ten new questions. Have you ever thought about that? So the answers grow linear, but the don't know grows exponential.

So that's number one. Number two, contrary to what every mathematician and scientist would have ever thought in the past, it turns out that modern math and modern science have at their core a tremendous appreciation of limits as to what can be known. Heisenberg uncertainty in physics, Gödel incompleteness and undecidability in mathematics, don't know moves large in modern science and math. And important plays an important role. Thirdly, sooner or later, we're going to get old and stupid.

All of us. We're going to be faced with don't know. So it's good to realize that don't know doesn't have to be a problem.

See, here's like chaos, confusion, doubt, indecision and a frown. This is don't know as a problem. Conditional happiness or surface happiness comes about when we can reduce don't know itself. But it turns out that unconditional happiness or deep happiness is related to the elevation or increase of an experience of don't know with a smile. Don't know with a smile is the meaningful experience of meaninglessness. That sounds oxymoronic, meaning contradictory in and of itself.

Maybe sounds like just some sort of word game. But there is such a thing as a meaningful experience of meaninglessness. And actually it comes about when you have a sensorially clear, concentrated and a quantum experience of confusion, doubt, indecision and chaos.

Then that experience actually starts to taste like something that has meaning. Because you're working through the need to know and that leads to a new kind of knowing. So in mindfulness practice you get the insights by observing, careful observing and analysis.

But in Zen practice, for example, at least Rinzai Zen, there's a certain amount of observing, that's true. But also there's this, what they call koan practice, you're given a problem that you cannot solve intellectually. But then you're pressed to solve it.

But you can't. And you're thrust into a continuous don't know mind state. Which at some point you stop fighting and then a new kind of knowing starts to flow through you. So deep happiness is the experience of don't know in an empowering way. So you see the contrast? Get pleasure versus get fulfillment, which is a function of mindfulness. Avoid discomfort versus avoid suffering, a function of mindfulness.

Get answers to this or that, by way of contrast, get the answer. Well, this is a function of mindfulness. Avoid don't know mind, learn to experience don't know mind as an empowerment. Well, this is a function of mindfulness. Now here's the objective world in surface happiness.

Get certain conditions, avoid other conditions. The objective world in deep happiness is one's objective behaviors. The surface happiness point of view is, I want this, I want to avoid this. The deep happiness point of view is, well, if I can improve this and avoid this, I'm likely to get this.

So it's putting first things first. But how does mindfulness weigh in? Well, if situations are to a certain extent, I don't claim 100%, I think chance enters in probably, for sure. But in general, if circumstances are a consequence of behavior, if we have a handle on our behavior with time on average, it's likely we're going to get the circumstances we want. However, our behaviors are driven by our sensory experiences, our mental image, our mental talk, our physical and emotional sensations drive our behavior. Mindfulness gives us a handle on our sensory experience, that gives us a handle on our behaviors.

That tends to lead to surface happiness. And besides, concentration and clarity and equanimity not only bring about wisdom mind, they also increase your normal IQ. I do not have any scintilla of doubt that in my late 60s, now, I am incomparably smarter than I was in my 20s. Just smarter in the sense of regular old intellectual smarts. Why did I get smarter and smarter? Because of meditation. So mindfulness affects IQ, I believe. So it actually helps with this one. And, you know, if you have sensory clarity, that can also help you solve problems, etc. You make positive behavior changes, well, you're likely to have more health and less physical problems, etc.

As a consequence of this, these two can go up. So mindfulness also has an impact on our surface happiness. I don't mean to dissurface happiness by calling it surface. It has a role. So we want to get both. So we want to increase positive behaviors, we want to decrease negative personal behaviors. That's the objective piece in deep happiness. So I should say, however, that mindful awareness skills alone may not be enough to achieve behavioral changes. They're very helpful, but you may need some sort of objective accountability structure, like a 12-step program, a therapist, what have you, for behavior change. In addition to the mindful awareness, they potentiate each other. So that's sort of what these symbols mean.



## SHINZEN YOUNG's "HAPPINESS CHART"

Here, the basic formula, as you'll recall, is mindful awareness leads to six factors that constitute, let's just say it's for you, this is the happy pointing to you.

There's six things that are thought of as being, whoops, let's do it surface first. Surface or ordinary human happiness, and remember it was get pleasure in the body, avoid discomfort in the body, get various answers in the mind, avoid don't know mind, in the mind, get situations that you want and avoid situations that you don't want, okay. This ordinary happiness plus deep happiness for yourself.

Deep happiness, you remember the difference, okay, here you want fulfillment, here you want to elevate fulfillment, you want to avoid suffering, you want to get the answer and you want to be able to experience don't know mind as an okay thing. And then here, instead of situations, it's behavior. You want to manifest a love cause and effect, positive behavior, cut down on negative objective behavior, those are the objective factors, these are the sensory factors. This leads to a motivation to help other people and I mentioned why that is and what form that takes. So this is a love of the human condition.

What I drew there, it was a heart and this is the Chinese character for humanity. This is bodhicitta. This leads to bodhicitta in the Buddhist context, which then leads you to spread surface and deep happiness to others and all of this, this plus this and this equals total human happiness.

It's this plus this. It's not just learning how to get fulfillment, it's also getting pleasure. It's not just avoiding suffering, it's also avoiding discomfort. It's not just getting enlightenment answers, it's getting these two, these together, the situations you want. So this plus this leading to this, leading to this, you'll be happy in every way. So that's details about happiness.

## Shinzen's 30 Second Samadhi

Water. Sometimes I get this. It's coming.

Oh great, thanks. Don't want to be too scratchy.

## SHINZEN's BILLION DOLLAR HYPOTHESIS

Another thing that's happening is I'm on to the single most exciting science research prospect of my career. If my idea is right, well, you'll see it.

You will definitely see it. So you want to hear the expansion and contraction on my idea? Yes. Okay, let's start with expansion.

No. Which shall we start with? Let's start with expansion. So you know, it's a big thing for me, what I call the philosophy of the American philosopher Harry, I don't know if you've ever followed Harry. Dirty Harry pretty much summed it up for me. He used sexist language, but that was just his character.

You have to forgive him for that. One very important philosophical point that comes across from Dirty Harry is a man's got to know his limitations. So what does that have to do with anything? Well there is a general tendency for people that have deep and authentic mystical experience to make broader claims about that than are justified, I think. Don't get me wrong, it's still the best thing ever, ever, ever for our species. But typically people that have these kinds of experiences claim that they have a special knowledge of the ultimate nature of nature and they have the final answer for everything. I think that that's an irresponsible claim. Irresponsible claims may seem innocuous enough, but they can poison our relationship to the scientific world. Because in science the one thing you are not allowed to do is make irresponsible claims. You have to have evidence and you have to have logic and it has to be tested and tested in many locations around the world for decades and decades before it's allowed to be called a theory.

So it's a big deal. Because I am very colored by the philosophy of Dirty Harry, which is the philosophy of science, I don't like to make irresponsible claims. Why am I going to say that? Because I'm about to say something that's going to sound like the most egomaniacal, hideous, delusional claim that you have ever heard me make. But that's going to be the expansive side. Then I'm going to show you the contraction that it's really not what you might think. So I'm on to an idea that objectively, absolutely, incontrovertibly is worth billions of dollars.

I've got a billion, multi-billion dollar idea. That is not an exaggerated claim. I'll stand by it.

But now you have to hear the contractive side. Whenever anybody says something, the first thing you ought to have to do is, what's your definition of X? You've talked about that over and over and over again. By what criterion am I evaluating the monetary value of this idea, is the natural question to ask. I'm evaluating it by the criterion of the way all science projects are evaluated, what statisticians call expected value or expectation value. That is the value of success multiplied by the probability of success. Follow what I'm saying? That's the expected value. It's basic statistics. So what I gave you was not the value of the idea if it's successful. I gave you the expected value. The value of the idea if it's successful is vastly more than a billion dollars. So what does that mean? Yes. The probability of success is not really big. I give it a thousand to one.

Now you might think, well, that's a real letdown. They call it blue sky research or moonshot. It's actually an important aspect of science.

Some philosophers of science would say that blue sky research is the single most important kind of research to do in science. Projects that have a reasonable probability of success with a huge payoff. But one in a thousand is actually a reasonable probability. Every idea I've ever come up with before has been one in a million, one in a billion. Not very likely.

This is better. It's one in a thousand. But still it's one in a thousand, so do the math. However the payoff would be trillions and trillions in monetary.

It would change the course of human history. You could put a price on it, just figure out what the price of the world is, and then do some non-trivial percentage of that or some percentage of that. So anyway, I got an idea and I've got scientists who think it's reasonable and I've got people that are willing to pay for the research. That's really, really cool. But it's also something I have to devote some time to. So there's that. I've already told you what the idea is actually.

It's actually on the YouTube. The last person that interviewed me, I laid it all out if you're interested. I think it was the last interview with the gas— Buddha at the Gas Pump, remember? It was that one.

I was talking about atheim hormia and the basal ganglia and neuromodulation. That was the last time I heard this Buddha at the Gas Pump. I'm pretty sure I talked about it at the end. One of the— It was your happy skull.

It was the culminated with. So it involves my favorite disorder. I have a favorite disorder.

It's a rare neurological disorder. It's horrible, don't get me wrong. When it happens to people it's horrible, horrible, horrible. But it may have a huge silver lining for research. And even for those people, actually, if my hypothesis is correct, you can look it up on Wikipedia. It's called atheim hormia, A-T-H-Y-M-H-O-R-M-I-A.

You can read a popular article about it in Scientific American Mind 2005. The article has the rather intriguing title of The Drowning of Mr. M—or no, no, I'm sorry, Drowning Mr.

M. Would you spell it again? A-T-H-Y— Well, now once again, words and their actual meaning. I'm going to tell you the Greek origins, but that's not what the condition means, okay? It's just what people called it. So what does thymos mean in Greek? T-H-Y-M-O-S.

I'll give you a hint. Dysthymia, euphymia, alexithymia. It's what I call feel. Or it's emotion.

Okay. Thymos is emotion. And what's hormamine mean? I'll give you a hint. Hormone. They stimulate you. So it means stimulation or motivation. A is an alpha privative, which means without. So if you just look at the words, it seems to refer to a condition where there is no emotion or motivation. A-thym-hor-mia.

Ia is a condition. Horma is motivation or, yeah, motivation. Thymos is emotion. So A is without. So the word seems to mean, but does not in its essence actually mean, a condition of no emotion and no motivation.

Okay? A-t-h-y-m-h-o-r-m-i-a. Also sometimes called athymhormic syndrome. It's a syndrome, which actually makes it interesting because it can be caused by a wide variety of lesions in different locations and of different origins. And they can even happen at different times in a person's life. But if they happen in just the right place on both sides of just the right circuit in the basal ganglia, you develop a caricature, not of stream entry, not of once-returner, not of non-returner. You develop a caricature.

I hope you all hear what caricature means. Not the real thing. A bizarre something like Arhatsha. Full in-line, full liberation. Complete breaking of the identification of the mind-body process. Total freedom from desire. And the ability to experience pain of any sort, apparently, without any suffering. And the ability to maintain a total mental tranquility indefinitely as a pathological state with a well-defined physical origin.

So of course, a neuropsych medical professional sees a horrific disorder. I see a caricature of full liberation with a known physical cause, purely biophysical cause. And a biophysical cause that any first-year medical student would immediately see on an x-ray. Okay? So it's

nothing esoteric in that regard, but the effect on the human being is bizarre. The other name for this condition is much more revealing. It's mostly been studied by a handful of doctors in France. The French name is PAP, P-A-P. Perte d'auto-activation psychique.

Perte is loss. De auto-activation. Of inner auto-activation. They cannot boot personhood from the inside.

Cannot. Now an enlightened person can manifest it or demanifest it as the conditions warrant, and the it is inner activation. People with this disorder are stuck on no-self, unless you activate them from the outside, in which case, in the most ideal perfect case of athymormia, where the lesions are like Goldilocks, not too big, not too small.

If they're just the right size and just the right place. In the classic case, when you activate that person from the outside by speaking to them, they are completely normal. But unless you keep activating them, within a minute or two they fall back to a sort of bizarre noble silence. This to me is intriguing.

It is not subtle. Knowing Mr. M is about someone who first noticed this condition while he was swimming in his backyard. The way he noticed it is that he no longer felt any need to swim or move his body. Now it's true, his head was in the water and therefore he was breathing water. He knew that he could turn his head any time he wanted, but breathing water, breathing air, not so different. He's aware that he's sinking to the bottom of the pool and that he's dying, but being alive, being dead, not so different. His daughter comes out, sees what's going on, screams and reactivates his normal self-preservation. He flails to the surface and doesn't die.

Hence the intriguing title of the essay in Scientific American, Drowning Mr. M. It's in your book. Maybe I mentioned it briefly. Well, I've been looking a lot deeper into it, a lot deeper. It's not an easy subject to look into scientifically.

Functional neuroanatomy at that level is not well understood. But in any event, it's a caricature, but it has some overlap. It's nothing mysterious or abstract. It's grossly physical. To me, the fact that it's stunningly dramatic and that it has some overlap—I don't know exactly what the relationship is. I mean, it is a disorder, but it overlaps in not just one or two ways. It overlaps in about a half dozen ways with what we're spending our lives trying to achieve here. So that combination of we know physically exactly what's happening and it has an overlap and it can happen within a week or a few minutes, and it has an overlap, many intersections with what takes a lifetime to achieve with practice is not the whole picture. As soon as I talk about that, people, they think I'm stupid or something. They think I'm equating this with what we want, or they think I think this is the whole picture of what we want.

I'm not naive, but I am saying that some things really jump out in this as a possible research avenue. Not so much to have a physical intervention. My paradigm is not so much, oh, we're going to figure out a way to accelerate meditation. I'm much more grandiose than that.

My paradigm is we're going to simply make liberation part of standard medicine everywhere in the world. How could that possibly be? Well, what's wrong, what's the difference between athymormia and being an R-hot? I told you what the similarities are. That R-hot can activate itself. That's certainly one difference.

I didn't hear that. An R-hot can activate itself if need be. I can show you the similarities, I can show you the differences, and then I can make some conjecture about how we may be able to get the baby and throw away the bathwater, so to speak. If that metaphor makes sense.

The baby being the liberation, the jewel and the lotus. What is different? Well, clearly one thing that's different is, see, this is why the condition is so perplexing to doctors, the few

doctors that know about it or have researched it. It's very rare, by the way, very rare, because like I say, the lesions have to be in exactly the right spot and exactly the right size. If they're not big enough or not in the right locations, then you won't get this dramatic effect. If they're too big or in the wrong locations, you get a whole bunch of other effects that basically leave that person totally disabled and you can't boot a self by talking to them. They have what's called a kinetic mutism. The thing about atheimhormia is, on the surface it looks like a kinetic mutism. A kinetic mutism means you no longer move and you no longer talk, but you're not in a coma, you're not paralyzed, you're not even somnolent, you're not depressed, but you just no longer talk or move ever. So you might as well be in a persistent fidget. That's the extreme case of a kinetic mutism. That's when you get the lesions, similar lesions, but they're too big and then they just wipe you out.

This is expansion and contraction. It's just right so that it leaves the possibility that just by speaking they're back to normal without cognitive or behavioral deficit for about a minute. So you have to keep activating them. Of course, if someone were to simply create an app that talked to them all day, presumably they'd be back to normal.

Let's see, who knows how to design those kinds of apps? I think I do. One difference is you can't manifest self unless you are dependent on another person manifesting, drawing it out of you. But in the most ideal case, they're actually just normal for a few minutes. I actually have a student who was a neuropsych evaluator who had this condition in a patient. He's one of my facilitators back east. He teaches neuroscience now actually. But he wrote up a case study and he confirmed for me just on his anecdote that absolutely that's what it was like.

The guy never complained. He'd been a math prof at one of the New York universities, the patient. If you asked him to deliver a lecture on advanced math he could do it just fine if you kept him going. But if you went away he would just sit there and look at you and wouldn't eat and wouldn't move all day, day after day. Not subtle, okay? The size of these lesions, rice grain, but bilateral.

For a few rice grains over the head of the caudate nucleus will do this if it's just in the right place. Whoa, that's pretty dramatic. Okay, one difference, it's totally dysfunctional obviously so we don't want that. So what makes up an integrated enlightenment? Well concentration, clarity, equanimity, plus wisdom. You have a paradigm about how, you know, about emptiness, suffering, self.

You've got a view, a darshan, a dhāwa as the Tibetans say. There's wisdom function. And then there's the whole dimension of practice that might be called integration of the void, the degree to which emptiness, your own emptiness, the emptiness of the world is a healthy, empowering, enlivening, fulfilling, and liberating for you versus the degree to which it's not that yet. Some people have no difficulty integrating the void. Some people have to work at it. Some people have to work a lot harder at it. Every now and again you get the dark night where it's actually sort of catastrophic but still fixable.

But that's very labor-intensive and may take a long, long time to fix that. So you have this whole spectrum of a dimension that might be called the degree to which the emptiness or the nothingness of self and world has been integrated. It's functional.

It does good things. So concentration power, sensory clarity, equanimity, insight, wisdom, and integration of the void might be one way to talk about dimensions of the practice. So here's my hypothesis. People with this condition have been biophysically, have biophysically induced irreversible perfect equanimity or something like that. Well, that actually could be a good thing. The one characteristic in all cases reported is they don't complain about anything.

Now are they actually happy? Okay so doctors know how to do something that they call a mental status exam. If you go on YouTube and learn how to do it, it's interesting. I did just

for the fun of it. Because they're a professional and it took actually many, many decades to figure out how to teach doctors how to do this, a quick mental status exam. It's very systematic.

It's very clever. Like I say, if you're interested, just mental status exam on YouTube and you can get a little tutorial on how to do it. Why do I mention it? Well, I'm a professional and I know how to do something called spiritual status examination.

It's just as well thought out and it's just as systematic. No one has ever done a spiritual status examination on an athymormia patient. I'm going to see if I can pull some strings and make that happen. Until then I can make a hypothesis. My hypothesis is they have a physically induced profound equanimity and they probably do not have the taste of concentration or sensory clarity, because that has to be cultivated. And they probably do not have the insight and they probably have not integrated their own nothingness. So they're probably lacking those three elements, four elements, is my guess. So the question is, and I'm not pretending I know the answer to this question, but if the answer happened to be in the affirmative, that could be very, very good. But I don't have a clue.

But I certainly know what the question is. Since these are all dimensions of a single gestalt in healthy practice, will the fact that one of those dimensions seems to be on max all the time, would that make it easier for them to quickly attain the other dimensions with interactive guidance? Because remember you can turn them on by interacting. So if they were given a little bit of interactive coaching, could we re-engineer this from a bizarre caricature to something like the real thing? Is there a potential for neuroplasticity in this condition? I have no idea.

But I think it's an important question. These lesions are static? They're permanent, yeah, if that's what you mean. And they happen... Well, they're permanent and they don't change size. That's correct. Well, it's sort of...

Let's see. They may change size if they're dependent on tumors. It can be caused by a lot of things.

That's what's so amazing. It can be caused by ischemic stroke, what are called lacunar infarctions. But it can be caused by tumors in those locations.

Those might change size. It can also be caused by carbon monoxide poisoning. Apparently the basal ganglia are very vulnerable to carbon monoxide poisoning. There's even one case where it was caused by a wasp sting, an anaphylactic shock. Happened for whatever reason to hit right in the right place in the basal ganglia.

So they can be caused by various things, but essentially, yeah. So let's say we got lucky. Let's say that there's a one in ten chance that there's some potential for training here that's significant. That's just a guess. It might be one in a hundred. So if that were the case, that would be interesting and good for patients, for the few hundred people around the world that has this condition. We put it into an app for them and it would be nice. But then we have to, of course, ask bigger questions.

Of course, go big or go home. So let's say we got lucky. Let's say it turns out that because they're in perfect equanimity, they can acquire all this other stuff in a few weeks. Now they'd still need an app to keep them like human, okay? But the combination of that app, the app would deliver two things. It would keep them activated and it would train them in what they lack.

The paradigm, the integration, the concentration, the clarity skills. Let's say we get lucky and this works. Well that's great for a few hundred people that have a rare disorder. And I don't give that even a high probability. That's low probability that this is so. Let's say we got lucky and it turns out it is so. What's the next question? What about everyone else in the room?

Well now, we could, of course, through various means, high intensity focused ultrasound, for example, we could lesion your brain and then give you the app. That something tells you that this is not going to get FDA approved.

Yes, imagine the IRB. We want to take a healthy person and cause a horrific dysfunction that will cause their family to have to pay millions and millions of dollars to warehouse them for the rest of their lives. And we would like human subjects approval to do this. Well, maybe in the Third Reich, but certainly not in the civilized world. But let me throw out a very weird sounding word, a very weird sounding phrase that is not science fiction, but it actually is science, is done, is known. You can look it up if you want.

It's going to sound a little weird, a little oxymoronic. The phrase is virtual lesion. Now you say, what the hell is a virtual lesion? A lesion means destruction, damage to tissue. So what's a virtual lesion? Specifically what's a virtual lesion in someone's brain? There are forms of neuromodulation which will temporarily downregulate or even suspend the activity of a certain region in the brain in a way that no harm is done and the normal activity returns in a short period of time. That's a virtual lesion.

They're not very controllable at this point in terms of precision, location, and so forth. But it is done. It's done for basic science research and you can get an IRB for that. You can get an Institutional Review Board approval.

That means a human subject's approval is done all the time. I volunteer. Now I've already decided which cranium is going to be the first one to go under the virtual scalpel. Guess which one? It's a long, long tradition in medicine of doctors researching on themselves. Sometimes the results have been fatal.

I didn't want you to hear that. Maybe it won't have any effect on you. How will you know? Well, actually, my thing is I probably know better because I can calibrate the dose and the location.

Would you lose the ability to calibrate? Not if they're talking me through because you could activate me. Oh, you guys are all freaking out. Remember, the universities where we're planning on doing this will not give approval. Unless it is absolutely safe. I can promise you there's no university in the civilized world that is going to let anyone do anything on anyone where there's a potential for damage that is known. No one will allow me to do this unless a very, very tight ass group of people have looked at it and said, this is safe. This is not like you can't just go off and do stuff. You have to get institutional approval.

They have structures and they are very, very conservative as to what they let you do. Don't worry, I'm not going to come back like Max Headroom or something. The next question is, can we temporarily induce it with virtual lesions? Probably not, unfortunately, because the virtual lesions are hard to control. Remember, we're talking about surgical strikes here.

We're talking about cubic millimeter precision. So probably not too bad, but hey, let's give it one in ten. Let's be generous. Well, if number one turned out, that's a one in ten shot. And number two turned out, that's a one in ten shot. So now we're talking about a one in a hundred shot. But that would mean that we could take people, put them in this state and accelerate their practice. That would be good for the meditators of the world.

But like I say, my ambition is much, much bigger. It's like everyone or it's todo o nada. It's like you do the whole thing, we fix the planet or I'm going home. The next thing you'd have to get very lucky is that the medical establishment realizes that this is an alternate, a better way to do a whole bunch of things that they're currently trying to do. Like treat addiction or manage pain or induce general anesthesia or cure depression. For people to be depressed, you have to have negative ideation. There's no such thing as being depressed without intense, incessant negative rumination. People in an athiomorphic state have no rumination at all. They can't ruminate, even if they wanted to.



I've got to ask myself, if we had safe, virtual athiormorphia and you took a depressed person and suspended their depression completely for an hour or a week and were guiding them in mindfulness practice the whole time, when that intervention is over, would it have any effect? Who knows? But it's not a ridiculous question. Maybe you get lucky. Maybe you've got a cure for depression. I'll put a monetary value on that. So we'd have to get lucky, number one, and we probably won't.

The first lucky is the condition is actually one of enhanced neuroplasticity for acquiring the other factors you need to be liberated. Probably not, but maybe. Then we'd have to induce it safely, reliably, controllably, easily, non-invasively.

Is there a way to do that now? Probably not, but maybe. Then it would have to turn out that doing that turns out to solve a lot of standard medical things. We know for sure that people in an athiormorphic condition report pain, even intense pain, without suffering. In other words, they feel it, but they don't experience it as a problem.

I mean, I've meditated for a long time, but I cannot breathe water as easily as I breathe air. And this guy did in a minute, just because he had a tumor in just the right place. So is this another way to have analgesia, anesthesia? I don't know, but it's not a ridiculous question. So first we have to get lucky the condition is treatable. When we have to get lucky, we can induce it simply, reliably, safely, non-invasively, controllably.

These are all big things. And neuromodulation at this point might be able to do that. So that's get lucky number two. Then get lucky number three, it turns out that when you do this, it's not just a nice thing for people that want to meditate, it speeds up your practice.

It has one, but I'm guessing if it has one, it probably has a half dozen, significant applications in standard medicine, both physical medicine and psychiatry, addiction recovery. That's get lucky number three. Now how do you compute the probability of the overall success if it's contingent on, let's say, one in ten chance of A, one in ten chance of B, one in ten chance of C? What's the total probability of success? One in a thousand. One in a thousand. It's a tenth. Are you sure about three being one in ten? Are you sure about your third case being one in ten, or do you guess it's one in ten? My guess is somewhere between one in ten and one in a hundred for each of these. So what does that give us? If it's one in a hundred, that gives us a total probability of one one hundredth times one one hundredth times one one hundredth. What's that? That makes it one hundred. If it's ten, it's one tenth times one tenth times ten. It's one in a thousand. So somewhere between a million to one shot and a thousand to one shot I think is reasonable. But the payoff is still going to be in the tens of trillions. So the expected value is just huge. So that's pretty exciting.

Question? Yeah. Can you explain why number one is necessary? Well if it's not trainable, then it's not a situation that can be used to accelerate spiritual growth. Number one means... If those subjects have possibly a normal brain that has a temporary lesion, a virtual lesion, I am going to.....exclude number two. Yeah, I'm going to guess that because the only thing different about the person with the permanent lesions and the temporary lesions is one is permanent. There's no other difference in the most idealized case of athiormorphia. There's a lot of difference that we know of, but there's a few subjects with the condition. It seems to me that it might still be reasonable, even if number one fails, to find a, hopefully not Shenzhen first subject, to step up and have a virtual lesion. I'm guessing since the physical and psychiatric exams on the most idealized athiormorphic patient show them as being completely normal, it's most likely that there's nothing else going on there.

So that's a nice idea. You didn't have your first sell to the institution that you were also a part of. You didn't have number one success. No, no, actually... Oh, now you're on to something. Okay. Now you're on to what we're actually going to probably do. I don't think I'm going to be able to get access to the athiormorphia patients.

That's a big deal because it's too rare and I don't think I'm going to be able to do that. So I'm going to make a hypothesis that it's trainable and we're going to go right to the virtual lesion. So you're absolutely correct in that you're totally on the mark with respect to my strategies. We want your brain.

So this isn't what I intended to talk about at all. Here we are. Did we get it on camera? It's all on camera. Okay. We've got the record of it.

You heard it here first. It's still between one in a thousand and one in a million. But if we get very, very lucky, this is going in the archives, you could all say, I was there when they made that YouTube. The one that has a thousand more views than any YouTube in the history of YouTube because... So that's my thing.

Okay, go big or go home. Have you ever got a dark night in a brain scene? No. I don't think someone else has. But what we did capture at Harvard was a physical cessation in one of the participants, a real neuroda where she was gone, gone, gone for a minute or two. We captured that in an MRI scanner. Even though it's been years ago, we still have not gotten around to analyzing that part of the data.

It takes forever to analyze this data. But we did capture that, but no, we've never gotten a dark night. Well, I'm sorry. I just got carried away. I was just going to explain why I might not be answering your phone call. Now I filled in the details so you can maybe have some vicarious whatever... Say what? You'll continue to retreat? Oh yeah, yeah.

You won't see that much difference, just maybe a little latency in my response. And now we're getting at equanimity. Because he's off on his mad scientist trip doing what he always wanted to do, which is control people's brains. Okay, well, sorry about that.

I got carried away. Is there anything we can do to help? Volunteer your brain? No, deepen your practice. That's what helps. It forms the base in the world to deepen your own practice. Because the more people that go deep, it creates a culture where someday some team of researchers will pull off something like this, if we can last long enough. Now, can we last long enough? That's a whole other thing. I'm not going to predict if we're going to make it or not. But if we can somehow just hang on, keep civilization going for another century or so, I would say there's a high probability that some group of people will come up with something like this. And then the world will change rapidly, rapidly for the better. It's the old messianic vision, but not based on mythology, based on logic and evidence. So anyway, so much for that.

## SHINZEN's CYBORG TEACHING FANTASY

So, there are some standard things that I usually say. Got another one? Oh, sorry. It's okay. And there's five more mics over here we'd like you to wear. Actually, I'm looking forward to the day when there's just a tablet up here and all these recorders here. No teacher, no students. So maybe that'll be in the cyborg future.

## SHINZEN's DAIS ... for a few moments

Yn ystod y ffwrdd, y ddau ariannau a'r cwpanau yma, mae'n rhaid i ni ddod o hyd i'r ddau ariannau. Fe wnaethon ni ddod o hyd i'r ddau ariannau a'r cwpanau yma. Mae'n rhaid i ni ddod o hyd i'r ddau ariannau a'r cwpanau yma. Fe wnaethon ni ddod o hyd i'r ddau ariannau a'r cwpanau yma. Fe wnaethon ni ddod o hyd i'r ddau ariannau a'r cwpanau yma. Fe wnaethon ni ddod o hyd i'r ddau ariannau a'r cwpanau yma. Fe wnaethon ni ddod o hyd i'r ddau ariannau a'r cwpanau yma.

## SHINZEN's PANDEMIC STRATEGIES

One of the advantages of being 75 years old is I can say, in my day, such and such and such and such. And the in my day is not just the 1960s. The formative period for me was the 50s. And I was born in the 40s. I was born during World War II. So I remember a very different US. Very, very different. And I know we look out and we see lots of problems, sources of frustration and so forth.

But sure. There's also, however, the extraordinary shift that has occurred that I never in my wildest dreams would have thought could occur. The US of my formative years was a culture that looked eternal. I assumed things would be essentially the same when I'm 75 years old as when I was five years old. So when I was five years old, who was President Eisenhower? I think so.

So that's what I thought, that's the way I thought it would always be. The notion that what is essentially an import from Asia would fundamentally impact broad aspects of North American culture is completely off the charts. Unthinkable that anything like that would happen. So for me, because I compare to my youth, what we're doing here, what I do every day, what thousands of people are doing around the world every day with this practice, this is miraculous.

It's still miraculous for me. I wanted to show you this very cool book. I think it's a cool book now.

I thought it was monstrous when I was 15 years old. This book is emblematic of the way things used to be vis-a-vis this practice, not all that long ago. So this book is by Ernest Becker, who it turns out was actually not a small figure. He made later in his career some substantial contributions to the field of psychology, but he launched his literary career with this book, *Zen Irrational Critique*.

Based on essentially no knowledge whatsoever of Zen, but a desire perhaps to make a name or create a straw man that's easy to attack or what have you. He writes this book, now let's see here. I read this book and it devastated me when I was a teenager, just devastated me. Let's see here, what's the date? 1961.

Ha ha. So let's see what this book says. This is 1961, oops, sorry about that. Without this, I won't read it.

Okay. The appeal of Zen to a variety of Westerners, both dilettantes and professionals has been increasingly and to some has been increasingly evident and to some has become a matter of concern. Appeal of Zen is a matter of concern in 1961. Zen typifies an Eastern approach to problem solving that is the opposite pole of Western ideals.

The human being puppet-like manipulates himself in the hope of coercing his environment steeped in a tradition of magical omnipotence. The Zenist seeks to bring other worldly power to bear upon this worldly problems. To this question, does Zen hold forth anything of value to the West? This book makes an unremitting negative answer and it goes on and on and on and on about how the practice that we do is essentially a form of mental illness. So this is a book written by a doctor and doctors have authority. And this was a book written before these kinds of practices were widespread. So I'm 15 years old, I picked this thing up, or however old I am, I was young. And it's like, oh my God, all this stuff I'm interested in is all bullshit.

Why? A doctor says so. It took me a long time to recover from that. That's why I love this so much now because of the sweet revenge.

Okay, the sweet revenge. We who are but of yesterday are now in all your therapy rooms and your board rooms and your military training camps and you name it. So big shift really, the notion that not only is this not superstition, magic and complete world denying nonsense, not only is it not that which people said it was in my lifetime, important people, turns out that there's a natural complementarity, a kind of natural co-evolution where the strengths of modern science and the strengths of contemplative practice can reinforce each other. And the weaknesses and dangers in each can perhaps be ameliorated and managed by the influence of the other. So yesterday I outlined four concepts. And if you know how to unpack these concepts, you'll have a sense of what a science informed contemplative based psycho-spiritual path can look like. So you'll recall, develop the skills, optimize the happy. So I'm gonna go through these four concepts and we talked about techniques and you get a lot of instruction in technique, but we also talked about the training structure wherein those techniques are implemented.

Retreat practice, life practice, get support, give support. We harp on these structures, establishing and maintaining them for the lifetime to at least a minimal degree. We talked about that. Another part that I alluded to, but I'd like to just fill out a little more detail is the accelerators. So you have to have the pillars. Without the pillars, you're not gonna have a practice. People will say, okay, well, are there things that can help speed it along? The practice, the progress, and yes, I would say so. We talk about this all the time, but I just wanted to mention it within the context of the online retreat that we're now doing.

So one of the accelerators is, you could call it duration training, strong determination set, Adipthana, Yuzha. Sometimes we call it heroic sitting. So extending the duration of your sit in a gentle way, but understanding that eventually every one of us will have sits with no bell.

I mean, guaranteed at the end of life, but also stuff happens. Where you just are sort of at the end of your rope. It's gonna happen. Circumstances will arise. And knowing that there is an ordering principle that is so primordial that it can never be disordered, no matter what state arises in mind, body, and outer world in terms of sensory impact. You can still be ordered.

You can still be okay. It may not be a human ordering, but it is an ordering principle that we can abide in and merge with that connects us to everything. And one of the ways that we learn about that is by sitting as though we weren't going to get up. It's a kind of attitude. Of course we're gonna get up, but each sit, at least the way my teachers taught me, each sit should be like, I'm not gonna get up.

What if there's no bell? That's how I should be sitting now. So you're always aiming at finding happiness independent of conditions at the most industrial strength level. So one way to learn about that, you don't wanna damage the body.

I've written and spoken quite a bit about this. You can read about it or talk to the coaches, facilitators and so forth, but no, you don't damage the body, but you push the envelope with sensations. And if you have a situation where sitting is not good for you, objectively, there's all sorts of other postures you can hold this Qi Gong stuff, where you hold your arms out, up, you squat.

These are standard famous practices done all over China. To this day, doesn't necessarily have to be that the posture that you break through is a seated one, because sometimes our bodies can be damaged by very long sets, but these other postures are innocuous, although they can be very intense. So extending the duration and also extending the duration of a period of practice does not necessarily have to be seated. I used to sometimes do a six hour practice periods without a scintilla of motion, but I would do them lying down. I'd get very comfortable.

In fact, very comfortable, like under the blankie, and, but I drink a lot of espresso before, so I'd be sure to easily stay awake. And then I would relax into a corpse posture that was as

corpse-like still as I could muster, and then just try two, three, four, five, six hours, just not move a muscle, and just work through that duration. So it doesn't necessarily have to be, duration training is not necessarily about dealing with discomforts. It's about extending how long you can maintain quality, unbroken formal practice through various kinds of situations. So here in this situation, we can still do that, and you have the convenience of your own home so that you can decide, am I gonna do a two hour block? Gonna do a four hour block, you know, before dinner, et cetera and other people will be in the Zendo. Now, when we have these things live, Cho, I actually have a question to you. I was just, when I was thinking about this talk, you know, at the retreats, we have people designate themselves as Yusa, sort of heroes, you know, that, okay, I'm gonna do this four hour block every day or something like that.

I'm wondering maybe we could set something like that up. Yeah, we never translated that, but we do have virtual sit leaders doing half day shifts. So sort of their Yusa, you know, like this afternoon, Nekoya started at three and she finishes at 10. So it's sort of. Sort of that.

Yeah, it was just a thought that occurred to me. Someone could say. We'll translate that. Today, you know, it's maybe under their picture or something and it's like, this is a four hour, you know, set and then other people who would be joining that set might have that inspiration in front of them, et cetera. Like we do in the physical retreats. I don't know, this is just a straight thought that occurred to me as I was thinking about things that might be helpful at the retreat.

Okay. So that's a way of pushing the envelope, duration training. Then there's trigger practice where you expose yourself to sights and sounds and touches that may create states and then you apply a technique. The technique doesn't have to be a turn towards a technique. It doesn't have to be focused in necessarily. It could be any technique. So I'm thinking in the practice at home situation that we're in now, there's also a lot of dimensions and directions where you could set up trigger practice. It might be actually more diversity and flexibility in the home situation. So once again, just something to consider if you have questions, but if you don't know what we mean by trigger practice, once again, the teaching staff will explain that to you. So I'm thinking we can incorporate that into the online retreats in maybe some imaginative ways.

And then maybe we'd get some reports on how that worked. Most specifically, motion challenge sequence. Usually at retreats, this takes the form of just walking practice or maybe the save a time. Of just walking practice or maybe the save a tasks that are done at retreats. But in your home, you have once again, a wider range of ordinary life activities that you can attempt to stay deep with a technique whilst engaging. So yeah, you can walk around, but you could walk around in different places. You can walk in your backyard, but maybe you walk through the neighborhood. That's a different experience, but also you can putter around the house. You can really do Chan, Zen style, Karma yoga kinds of things.

Try washing the dishes, try sweeping the yard, try even cooking a meal maybe. Maintaining a certain technique with a certain goal in mind. So once again, I think it will be interesting to explore the broader opportunities for motion challenge.

Here's another thing. This is a little bit on the more esoteric side, but some of you are familiar with the auto speak. We often do it in a very stereotyped way in the form of auto chant in the retreats, the residential retreats, but auto speak has, if you're familiar with it, you know that it has more interesting forms of practice. For example, you can arrange with another person to practice speaking from an unfixated place. They know that you might be a little awkward because you're trying to let it self-organize. So you speak from auto, but actually have a human conversation. Then they speak from auto. You could do that with another person at the retreat or with someone over the phone, et cetera. So once again, there are possibilities for other ways of practicing that we don't have so conveniently in the residential situation. So trigger practice, duration training, motion challenge sequence.

And then the final accelerator is not actually like those other three. It's an attitude thing, but it's very important. It's an attitude about situations. So one aspect of happiness is getting situations to be the way we would like them to be.

In fact, that's the first item on the happiness grid because that's the first thing most people think about. If there's a situation I don't want, let's change that situation, get rid of it. If there's a situation I do want, let's do what we need to do to make that happen. This practice is very relevant to situational happiness because of the general principle, what goes around comes around. If we act effectively as the result of having done this practice, then there's not the guarantee, but there's the higher likelihood and indeed the strong statistical force that in the long run, we're part of the force, the better angels of this planet. So we want to act effectively and certainly not be indifferent to situations. But situation practice as an accelerator is a little different aspect of it. It encompasses our actions for the situation, but it's a broader framework. The broader framework is broadly speaking, how am I going to use this situation as an expression of my practice? So if by situation, I mean various levels of scale. So a situation can be very private, very individual.

What's happening with my boil today that I have on my leg, that's a situation, a very local situation. Then there's this person in my life or that thing in my career. And then there's what's happening in the neighborhood, what's happening in the country, what's happening in the world, et cetera, et cetera.

All of the above are situations, various scales of situations. So if we approach each situation with a clear strategy for how we want to grow with this, how we're going to use this as an expression of practice, essentially that monasticizes life. You might say that one of the reasons in the old days, people went off to monasteries and actually they still do even nowadays, although it's not nearly as prevalent as it was at one time. At one time, East and West, the cultures were completely monastic. Now, definitely not that, but one of the reasons people go to monasteries is not to get away from things, but to be forced to confront things.

So the householders practice where we're not off in a monastery, what monasticizes the day, what turns the householders life into a monastic effect among other things, one important thing is, okay, sure, this is good, this is bad, we need to do this. We should have done that, all of that. But also, how am I using this situation to optimize my ability to be part of the solution and take measures, and we do have to take measures because it's very, very easy to fall into the problem of becoming part of the problem by the way that we try to solve the problem. It happens over and over and over again. So thinking about situations of all types and all scales, as they come up for us, having some sense of, okay, here's how the practice relates, here's how the practice relates.

This monasticizes the householders life. So these are the accelerators. So if you establish the pillars and then you strengthen things with the accelerators, then we're going to be in good shape, big picture wise.

So that was some of the sort of logistical things that are practical things that I wanted to make sure we covered. I thought it might be fun to have a little bit of poetry in addition to my sort of highly organized prose with so many charts and so forth. So I, hold it just a second, I have an actual printed book, the collected poems of T.S.

Eliot, says 1909 to 1962. So I didn't really prepare. Let me see if I can find something. There we go. That might be an interesting place to start. So I don't know much about the field of poetry, but I've had a lifelong fascination with one poet and not just any poet, but the poet universally thought of as the creator of modern English poetry.

So 20th century, which is where I lived mostly, 20th century was English poetry was dominated by T.S. Eliot. And I think for good reason, I'm not gonna give you a lecture on English literature, but I think there's good reason for that. You may mostly know Eliot from



his dramatic works, *Murder in the Cathedral* is one, but also *Cats*. I'm pretty sure that the big Broadway hit show *Cats* is based on a work by Eliot. So he did things in the drama area, particularly later in life, and was also influential in the theory of literary criticism in the 20th century. But it's his poetry that mostly attracts me because his last statement, at least the way I look upon it, he wrote many other poems, but I think if we look at the arc of this person's development, where he started and where he ended with his poetry, it's really emblematic of the zeitgeist or the spirit of the Western world in the 20th century.

That's quite extraordinary, really. So where he ended, most of you know this, maybe all of you know this because I use it a lot, where he ended was the *Four Quartets*, which is many things as the name implies. It's more than four voices. And each of the four sections has many subsections.

So there are many, many things in that poem. But the most important voice, the deepest voice, and the voice that hardly any of the literary critics who gave him a Nobel Prize for literature in 1948 even heard. They didn't even hear the really important voice in the *Four Quartets*.

The really important voice is, the *Four Quartets* is a East-West, mostly West, East-West, mostly West, poetic manual for the awkward, intermediate zone in contemplative practice. There can be actually many awkward intermediate stages that we go through. In fact, that's one way to look at what a lifetime of practice is. One, a climatization after another, after another, from an in-between zone that was not enough in the sense that the old coping mechanism that sort of works could be epitomized, characterized by the phrase, tighten up and turn away. The new coping mechanism that this practice gives us could be described as open up and turn towards.

You can see these are diametric opposites. So it's difficult to avoid awkward intermediate steps where the old coping mechanism has been somewhat shed, but the new coping mechanism is not mature enough to fully deal with the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune that come to us from the outer world and the percolations of poison and pain that well up from the inner. So there can be awkward intermediate stages that we have to go through in terms of emotions, but also in terms of what I call integration.

This is just a term that I've been using recently for something specific. I mean, obviously this whole path is integration, but specifically how do we integrate nothingness, no self, emptiness, borderless, decentered being? How do we integrate that into something that is humanly fulfilling and objectively admirable in the world? How do you integrate? How do you use nothing in the service of everything? It would seem like nothing would be in the service of nothing. It would seem if the goal of this practice is no self and emptiness, that this practice is not a good idea. Who wants that? And yet we know counterintuitively all over the world, East, West, ancient and modern, often without any mutual contact, the people that have followed this path have come to talk about a very special kind of nothing. So how is that in service of, how is the one nothing in service of the 10,000 somethings we need to take care of as a human being, integrating the void into a fulfilling and effective human manifestation? Some people can do it without any difficulty at all.

It just happens. They drink the void and it more or less cures their ills. And they don't need any integration training. Other people need integration training. They need some help, some guidelines. It's one of the reasons why we give you the, the feel great family right at the beginning, feel res, feel flow, feel bounce, feel good.

These are all useful for integrating emptiness down the line. So in any event, the four quartets, the last one starts midwinter spring is its own season. So midwinter spring, right? In between. Midwinter spring is its own season.

Sempiternal, though sodden towards sundown, suspended in time between pole and tropic. Midwinter spring is its own season. So time, but an in between time, in between summer

and, I'm sorry, in between winter and spring. But there's also the in between time between the winter of humanity's childhood and the spring and summer of what I believe will be our maturity, our adulthood as a species. And Eliot was a conservative Christian theologically. So he had a view of history, which is that at some point in the future, history is gonna take care of itself. That would also be the summer, the second coming.

I believe he was well beyond the mythological version of Christianity, but that's neither here nor there. Midwinter spring could be the individual practitioners state of gone halfway with this practice. It could be humanity's state of gone halfway to what we're supposed to be, either from a purely scientific Darwinian point of view, or hey, if you wanna sort of go archetypal like Eliot, link it to a religion, fine.

And of course, and there's the mid, just the season between, he's describing the countryside in England at a certain time of year. Hold it just a second. That actually wasn't the poem I was gonna read, but since I started it, I better find it. Little Gidding, Yipes 200, okay. Oh, opened right to it.

Maybe I can read this. Midwinter spring is its own season. Sempiternal, those sodden towards sundown. What does that mean? Sempiternal is not a common word. You might've heard it.

It means what it sounds like. It seems as though it's going to last forever. It's half eternal. So, sempiternal, seeming to last all day or forever, yet sodden towards sundown. But at the end of the day, we're back to the wet of winter. So, a day that could seem to last forever, but really is impermanent. Suspended in time, this is a great line.

Suspended in time between pole and tropic. He's mixing time and space, isn't he? He's treating space-time as one thing, the same way Einstein did. I have no idea if he knew that that was the case, if it's just a coincidence. Maybe he knew something about general relativity.

It certainly was in the air at that time. Suspended in time between pole and tropic. So, the polar regions are cold, the tropical regions are warm. So, you have the warm and the cold. So, the time and place are being completely woven together, space-time as a single thing.

To be both appreciated and transcended, actually. Midwinter spring is its own season. Sempiternal, though sodden towards sundown.

Suspended in time between pole and tropic. When the short day is brightest with frost and fire, the brief sun flames the ice on pond and ditches. In windless cold, that is the heart's heat, reflecting in a watery mirror, a glare that is blindness in the early afternoon.

Sorry, I sometimes lose my composure a little bit. A glare that is blindness in the early afternoon. What is the early afternoon here? What is the glare that is blindness? Well, on one hand, it's just the sun doing its thing at this time of year. But there's these weird words, windless cold, that is the heart's heat, reflecting in a watery mirror, a glare that is blindness in the early afternoon. The early afternoon is our early afternoon. The early afternoon of our practice.

And for Eliot, also the early afternoon of humanity. Given how he would have viewed what our future should be, what is this watery mirror? Well, it's the water on the surface of the ice that's somewhat melted. But a watery mirror is an imperfect vehicle of reflection.

There's distortion, and yet it is a mirror. Some of you may be familiar with the Buddhist notion of the five, of the great mirror wisdom. There's these five wisdoms, and one is called the great complete mirror wisdom in Chinese. So, this is also a metaphor for the wisdom function of the teenage meditator.

A little bit of the wisdom function is arising in your midwinter spring of your practice. But it's still a watery mirror. It's not crystal clear. And the blindness that he is talking about, about the glare that blinds you, is a direct reference to the Christian contemplative tradition.

What's known as Taboric illumination. T-A-B-O-R-I-C. What a great word. We need to use that word in ordinary conversations more frequently. Taboric.

It means referring to Mount Tabor. Har Tavor in Hebrew. Choshen and I have been there. We've run retreats there, actually. And it features prominently in the New Testament, specifically the Transfiguration. That's where the Church of the Transfiguration is.

And what happened there, according to the story, is Jesus was there with some of his disciples. By the way, it's called a mountain, but believe me, it's just a little hill. But a very important hill in the history of Western spirituality.

Iconic, actually. So what happened was Jesus was there with some of the disciples, and he just rose up into the sky. Moses is on one hand, Elijah on the other. And there's this light that just knocks everyone on the ground. All the disciples are just basically physically knocked down by this radiance that's sort of illuminating, transfiguring Jesus and the two made prophets from the Old Testament.

Great art, great iconic. That light, the blinding light, was called taboric illumination. We know about it, of course, from Eastern practices, where it's called the clear light of the void. Some of you have experienced it. It can come during the night or during sitting practice.

If you've ever experienced it, you know it is quite intense. But even just the sea rest, the grayscale blank, is a beginning of a hint of that. So Eliot is talking about that also. In other words, he's describing England in a certain season, but he's describing the mid-practice point, where you might be after 20, 30 years of practice.

In terms of, yeah, we're along, but we still have a very long way to go. Midwinter spring is its own season, sempiternal though sodden towards sundown, suspended in time between pole and tropic. When the short day is brightest with frost and fire, the brief sun flames the ice on pond and ditches. In windless cold that is the heart's heat, reflecting in a watery mirror a glare that is blindness in the early afternoon. And a glow more intense than blaze of branch or brazier stirs the dumb spirit. No wind, but Pentecostal fire in the dark time of the year, between melting and freezing the soul's sap quivers.

This is the springtime, but not in time's covenant. Now the hedge grow is blanched for an hour with transitory blossom of snow. Of snow, a bloom more sudden than that of summer, neither budding nor fading, not in the scheme of generation.

That light was called the ungenerated light of the source, not in the scheme of generation. Between melting and freezing, the soul's sap quivers. There is no earth smell or smell of living thing. This is the springtime, but not in time's covenant. Now the hedge grow is blanched for an hour with transitory blossom of snow, a bloom more sudden than that of summer, neither budding nor fading, not in the scheme of generation. Where is the summer? The unimaginable zero summer. The End. .

## Shinzen's Teachings with Music & for Education

I understand that you have some programs that are based on your techniques that have started to be employed in various places. And I wondered if there is something that you can share with us about what's happening with aspects of your basic mindfulness.

I know sometimes a particular focus, whether for pain or music or something like that. Is there something that you could share with us in terms of how your techniques are being employed in maybe institutions or educationally or health facilities? I think the two things that come to mind immediately are that other teachers are using my materials to teach meditation, the YouTube materials. So they're capturing YouTube segments and using them in the curriculum.

And I think that that's being done both for people teaching meditation pragmatically in the public, but also for people teaching courses on meditation in universities or courses that may be like Buddhism, Asian culture, comparative mysticism, that kind of thing, where academic professors are assigning some of my YouTube segments to supplement the supplementary materials. So that's one area. Then probably the most exciting thing is the development of music-based mindfulness for kids. And they're doing that in Portland State, and it was phenomenally successful. And we have Soryu's YouTube show, what we're doing in Burlington, Vermont. Now Soryu is in the public school system. First he was just in this after-school center with music-based mindfulness for kids. Now he's in the public schools doing mindfulness. And I think that's very exciting.

## Shinzen's Version of Lazy

So, basically, with regards to responsibility and work, I'm lazy. The only saving grace that I have is that a lot of things that are fun and play for me are considered by others to be work. Otherwise, I would be one of those homeless people.

## SHINZEN's WEIRD MEDITATION ~ Shinzen Young

So, I've been told that people like it when I talk about myself, my own experiences and things like that. So just for the heck of it, since I listen to your reports about your meditation, I thought you might, I don't know, for what it's worth, be interested in hearing my report about my meditation. Now, this is just one person's experience, though, remember, so the danger in this is to think, well, that's what Shinzen does, so that's what I should be doing. But not the case, profoundly not the case.

My standard answer to the question, how should I meditate, what's my standard answer? Whatever works. Claims are made, systems have strong points, they have weak points. And even a given individual may relate to one system at one point in their spiritual itinerary, they may relate to quite a different way of working later on.

So I'm not about to give the, I want to avoid giving the impression that there's a certain way that everybody should be doing practice. So I had a really intense and unusual experience during the process as I was guiding you in meditation in your practice today. So I wasn't following my own guidance, I got off on this other riff, okay. So what happened was is that I was sort of doing a version of outer sea rest, okay, that's the like looking out but not at, sort of the defocusing of the eyes that you know about.

But I did a variation on it. It was sort of like a combination of sea out and sea rest, in the sense that I experimented to see how, with making a very, very small aperture, but just enough of an aperture that pretty vivid patches of color would appear, okay. And so it was sort of like sea out because it was color but it was right on the cusp of this urge to look at it as an object, okay, right on the cusp. So what I saw was this field of patches of different colors that was the room in all of you folks. And then I sort of collapsed the distance between me and those color patches.

And those color patches were like paper thin but very vivid. It was like really, you know, it's interesting the word in Sanskrit, rupa, is ambiguous. It means both color and form. So it means color, it means form, but it also means matter in the sense of materiality. And you have to be a little careful when reading traditional Buddhist literature because sometimes like in the phrase nama rupa, in this case rupa means matter as opposed to nama which is mind.

But in other cases it literally means color or form, etc. So I was looking at rupa in the sense of just patches of color. So it was like really vivid, bright, but like paper thin. And what that created was this huge need to look at what the object was, to not look at it as just a patch of color. And it was a need that I can only describe as being like the need to breathe.

It was like I'm just going to die unless I objectify that color patch, those patches, and look at them as people and the room and so forth. And the way that it, the form that it took was that, okay, so the subject of self, see in, hear in, feel in. Now there are many layers of activation within that system. There's the surface that you could be aware of, but then below the surface there are subtle associational spreads.

There are, they are many, but they're much lighter, thinner in a sense. And then around those are subtler spreads. So it's not like there's just three strands, see, mental image, mental talk, and emotional body. If you think of it as like three colors, so imagine that you have this big red, this big red rope, but when you look really carefully, carefully at that red rope, it's got like green and blue mixed in. And then if you take one of those little strands of green or blue, you see, well, you know what, it's got some red and some other thing mixed in.

So it's really tangled, and it's tangled at many scales of subtlety. So I didn't have any surface, I didn't have much surface organized, see in, hear in, feel in, in the sense of the ordinary self kind of arising. But I was aware of this undercurrent, this constant deep, deep, deep sort of swirling of subtle see in, hear in, feel in that was going on, and what it was trying to do is make sense of things. And so that was part of what was driving that urge to objectify the patches of color.

But that wasn't the main thing that was driving the urge. I don't know if I should even talk, I mean, you know, people say they want me to do this, but I can see it's already getting weird and it's going to get weirder. So I've never tried this before, so we'll just see what happens. Okay, so there's this sort of background of really deep, really subtle flowing see in, hear in, feel in that's so deep and so subtle that it's not really clear what it is. But it's churning down there and it's trying to make sense of the world. But what was really interesting was that, I don't know how to put it, cutting through, like you know, like a hot knife through butter. So cutting through that was this constant movement of incandescent terror, to borrow a phrase from T.S.

Jackson, that would go away if I only looked at the world the way I usually look at it. And it was deep and just hot, that's the only way I can describe it to you. But because of years and years and years of practice, it was flowing. So it was also blissful. But it was absolutely incandescent, paralytic terror, associated with being right on the cusp. You know, it's like withholding an orgasm or something, sorry, okay I knew it was coming.

I just got it. But, okay, but I'm not, I'm sorry, that's what it was like. And the urge was, in this case, was to objectify the patches of dark and bright, the patches of colors. It was like, I just have to, but I'm not, I'm gonna suspend that. And what was driving it was the terror.

But fortunately it was flowing so it was actually pleasant. And otherwise it would be impossible to do this. So it was like this magic world.

Because there was, my eyes, so then I was experimenting with aperture, okay, like how wide can I get it and still just see patches of color and not give in to that need to make an object. Sasaki Roshi, some of you know this story, the first time I ever had a sanzen, or what they call sanzen in Japanese, it's a one-on-one zen interview. First time I ever had sanzen with him. I can't remember exactly what he says, most of our sanzens were in Japanese, but, and this was once. I don't remember the exact words, but I remember the general purport, which was, okay, Shinzen, you've been a monk in Japan, you know what this trip is about.

I'm tired of these wimpy Americans. I expect you to reach the point where you never need to make an object out of self or world again. Okay, now, sometimes zen teachers intentionally use ambiguous language, but other times zen teachers are very, very precise in their language. Did you hear exactly what he said? Because this was precise, okay. He didn't say, reach the point where you don't make an object out of the world or the self. He said, reach the point where you no longer need to make an object out of the world. But I'll tell you what arose in my image space when he said that. I had this image of him handing me a revolver and saying, okay, here's the gun, here's the bullets, put it to your head and blow it off, because, I mean, not make an object.

You're dead, right? I mean, if you're not making corpses, don't make an object out of self. But what the saving grace was is that I could see moment by moment, just by watching him, that indeed, that's what he was experiencing. I could also see that that did not one whit interfere with his ability to enjoy life and to deal with life in an efficacious way.

In fact, it very much empowered both of those. So I had this living proof that as counterintuitive as it might seem, it's like, who wants that? I could see he was doing it. It was evident in his body language. And I could see it really worked. It made him happy and powerful in the world.

So I guess it was okay. If I were to describe the body language, I would say that he has the body language of Ray Charles. Now, if you've ever watched Ray Charles, it's like, you sort of can't take your eyes off him. It's just something that you don't know what it is, but you just, you're mesmerized. Well, what I think you're seeing is there's one blind man that completely accepts his blindness.

He does not need anymore to see the world as an object, and that's reflected in his body language. So this was sort of a case in point. I could really see the structure of what was like driving me to turn colors of patches into people and objects and rooms and so forth, colored patches. So because of the years of training and skill and whatever, I was able to just maintain this indefinitely. And it was like really, really fun. So it was an interesting, you know, sort of, ah, I see that's one way that these sensory structures work. But then it got weirder. Got really weird. Because we're in this church, right? Chapel.

And it became every church in the world and every synagogue and every mosque and every guru bar, etc., etc., etc. I mean like in a really tangible way. Like a really tangible way. And then I was thinking, oh, I remember something a little like this many, many decades ago. And you know what that was, right? Psychedelics. Except no psychedelics. This is 100% attentional skills.

Attention, clarity, equanimity, that's it. But it was a trip. And unlike psychedelics, it didn't just go away.

It's like just there and there and there and there. So there was this sense of transcending time and space in a very tangible way. Now why would that happen? I wasn't really seeing the chapel as an object, but some part of me was processing it as what it was, but more in the sense of the platonic ideal. You know, it's interesting we have this word ideal. If you look it up historically, it comes from a notion of Plato, that there are these universal perfect forms. And it's quite evident from reading Plato that he didn't just come up with this entirely by intellectual speculation. I think he had actual experiences.

So these idealized perfect forms of things is an aspect of how deep image space works. I do a lot of my practice in visual experience. Yesterday I mentioned that you don't necessarily have to maintain a formal technique all the day.

For most people that's just not feasible, and you shouldn't think of that as a defeat, but you should have some practice in life, you should touch base. But actually I do attempt to maintain technique during most of the day. And if I am not doing the technique, it's actually a conscious decision, so it's almost the other way around. I decide, okay, let's take a little vacation, let's not get one-sided here, let's just go unconscious and munch on a burrito and watch TV or whatever, without practicing. But usually, like now, I have a technique going, right now as I'm talking to you.

And once again I hesitate to talk about it because it's like, well, okay, that's what he does, so that's what I should be doing, it's not that. But what I find, what allows me to be continuously tasting a deep meditative state is see out. And I alluded to that earlier today when I said, you know, there's like a hundred thousand shifts in the visual field. See out, gone, see out, gone, see out, gone, see out, gone, see out, gone. I'm actually verbalizing exactly what I'm noting, but the noting is on autopilot.

It just happens in the visual field for me. But it took years and years and years of practice. The first koan that Sasaki Roshi gave in that first interview, where, as I say, he handed me the revolver and said, I want you to spiritually kill yourself, not physically. The first koan was, when you see the flower, how do you experience true love? And then when you can't do it, he says, okay, I'll make it easier. When you see the flower, how do you experience God? Oh, you don't get it yet? Okay, like five months later, okay, well, I'll make it easier. When you see the flower, how do you become free from yourself? It's all the same thing, right? Well, how do you become free from yourself? Well, how does the self arise? When the eyes are turned



towards a flower, a self is going to arise as he is here and feel it, isn't it? Well if that doesn't arise, and if the visual field does not fixate, he can tell by your body language and so forth, that's how you pass the koan, not by explaining everything. You have to actually see the flower and everything. Because then the next thing is, okay, you experience God when you see the flower, now how do you experience God when you see Roshī? Okay, now you've got to look at him and do it.

And you'll be amazed, even though you know exactly what you're supposed to do, it ain't so easy. They took him to see a Charlie Chaplin movie once, and afterwards they asked him, Roshī, what do you think of Charlie Chaplin? And he said, Charlie Chaplin, very great actor, but I am a better actor. It's an authentic American Zen story. Meaning someone told me it, and it should have happened even if it didn't. One of the monks told me that that happened, so let's propagate that.

I wasn't there. But I'll tell you, I was there translating when he said that enlightened masters should model themselves on scientists. And I mean, Sasaki Roshī is an old timer, 105 years old. What does that mean? Well, did you see the movie *The Last Samurai*? If you saw that movie, that movie took place at the transition from feudalism to modern Japan. And there was a young emperor, remember the kid that he talks to that is the emperor when he finally meets the emperor? That was emperor Meiji.

So Sasaki Roshī can remember that emperor's funeral. He's just one generation out of medieval Japan. So for such an old timer to have such a radical notion, and it was specific, science improves in each generation. The paradigms and technologies of enlightenment should model themselves on that.

They should improve with each generation. If you're as enlightened as your teacher, if you're as good a teacher as your teacher, you only have half the virtue of your teacher, is the phrase that he used. Okay, well, that's a whole other little riff. Let's get back to my epiphany in the chapel. So what's going on here? Why would the, you know, I'm not exactly into mystical schmistical, okay, but this is sensory experience that is significant. Why would this happen? Well, it has to do with the freeing up of the deep levels of visual association. There's see out and there's see in.

What's behind see out? Well, presumably what's behind see out is an endless chain of causality that has led to this object or that object and so forth. That's called *pratītyasamutpāda* in traditional Buddhism, usually translated as a conditioned co-arising. Although *utpada* is a very interesting word because *ut*, it's actually cognate to the English word *out*, but in Sanskrit it doesn't mean *out*, it means *up*, *up*.

And *padati* means to fall, so *utpadati* means to fall up. So you know what it means to fall down, it just happens. A leaf falls, it just happens. This world, according to Buddhism, falls up into existence, the way a leaf falls down, which is rather extraordinarily similar to a notion in physics called entropy. Is that a coincidence? Maybe.

But to me it's intriguing. So *pratītya* means connected, or interdependent. *Samut* means together, *ut* means up, and *pada* means falling.

So falling up together through interconnectedness. The Japanese word is much shorter, it's *engi*. *Ti* means arising, and *en* means connection, so connection arising, *engi*.

In Mandarin Chinese it would be pronounced *yuanqi*. Now what's interesting is that as a technical term, *engi* means what I just said, it translates the Sanskrit *pratītyasamutpāda*. But it's also an ordinary colloquial word in Japanese that, well actually the *n* part of it, which is an abbreviation of *engi*, the *n* is an ordinary word in Japanese that means relationship or connection.

If you sense that you have a natural connection with someone, then they say you have a natural connection with that person. So the flower koan, there's another version of the flower koan. The older version, when I first started translating for him, wasn't how do you see God when you see the flower. For years he talked about how do you make a relationship with the flower.

Of course it's exactly the same thing. It's another way to say, and if you think he's talking about different things, then you get really confused. And of course as soon as he says relationship, then it's like people get all tripped out on relationship.

It's like a big buzzword for people, a big hot, warm, cold button, what have you. So then you're all tripped out on that. You don't really listen to what he means by relationship. But of course he's also implying that interpersonal relationships are best dealt with the same way you relate to experiencing God when you see the flower.

Because after you pass the flower and you look at him, then he says, okay when you see your lover, how do you experience freedom from yourself, etc. So this connectivity, as you well know, I don't claim, I try to be very, what would be the word, modest in my claims. I don't really claim to know any reality other than how the senses work. So I don't know what's out there in terms of the objective world. But if I had to make a guess as to what's behind see out, what we're actually looking at when we look at this color and form, which as you can see is quite labile, my guess would be that it's a vast network of connections without any things being connected. Now, hey, don't meditate on this, okay.

This is just, I said, if I had to make a wild guess. You know, what's really interesting is, and once again this is probably just a coincidence, but if I say mathematics, most of you probably think, well, it's very abstract. Especially, say, upper division or university level mathematics, sort of like abstract.

Among mathematicians, there's a branch of mathematics that they consider abstract. If you read any Wikipedia article on any math topic, you know how the Wikipedia, it's organized in a certain way. The first sentence is supposed to be something that a high school or junior high person can understand. And the first paragraph is supposed to be something that certainly most people can understand. But then they're allowed to go deeper and deeper and deeper into a subject. So that by the time you reach the end, at least in the math articles, you're dealing with the most advanced levels of mathematics. Like if you look up multiplication, for example, it will start with what you learned when you were six years old. But in the end, there's going to be something that is so abstract that you will wonder what in the world is this. And that the last part of each article on math topics in the Wikipedia is taken from that branch of mathematics that even mathematicians jokingly refer to as generalized abstract nonsense. And just for your reference, oh, by the way, how many times have you heard me say the way to learn technical terms is to not attempt to associate them with what they mean in ordinary English.

That will completely and totally screw you up. Right? When I try to explain what see in, hear in, feel in, et cetera, et cetera, I ask you, don't associate it with ordinary English. These are going to be defined in a certain way.

So anyway, I'm going to tell you what this branch of mathematics is called. And it's an ordinary word. And you're going to think it has something to do with what you think that word means. And it don't.

Or if it does, it's like so beyond that you don't have to worry about it. Anyway, it's called category theory. You can look it up if you want to really see something abstract. Why do I even mention this? Well, what's interesting is that many mathematicians believe that this is the foundations of mathematics, not set theory. This is really the deepest, most powerful statement that math has made to date.

And if mathematics is the language of physics, and physics is the language of our best understanding of the material world, then what's at the base of mathematics may, I don't know, maybe have something to do with what's at the base of spirituality. Anyway, why I mention this is, in this particular branch of mathematics, the only thing that you're interested in is arrows that point. And what do they point to? Other arrows. The objects are just arrows pointing to themselves.

It looks and smells like pratityasamutpada. It's just this connected to this, it points this way, it points that way. But there's no thingness here. It's all directions and relations. And it turns out that that's our most powerful statement.

And our ordinary arithmetic is a trivial consequence of this. So anyway, if I had to make a guess, I think that there are just arrows pointing to arrows pointing to arrows pointing to arrows. This being that is not, this not being that is not, okay, you may have heard the talk in those terms. So there's this vast realm of connectivity, presumably, that is what is. Color and form appear, my guess is that color and form are an abbreviated language that the brain has come up with in order to represent what, in a way convenient to our species, that vast network.

This is just a conjecture on my part. But what I can tell you for sure is that when you look into image space, when you look visually in the other direction, you actually see that vast network. Which is your imaginesmundi, your stored images of the world. It's constantly flipping through them like a rolodex at lightning speed. When you look at the image space, when you look at the blank mental screen, sometimes you might notice that there's a kind of shimmering there. That can be various things, it can have physical causes. But one of the things that it can be is the subconscious visual mind flipping through the rolodex. And you can get a sense that you're looking at worlds, and some of those worlds are memory, but some of them are fantasy worlds, mythological worlds, possum worlds. There's just a lot down there, and it just propagates. But it's all color and form, just very, very subtle. But it's the part that's so far in, it is me, you, it's my visual mind, but it's the sort of part of me that is so far in that's sort of out.

It sort of connects with that other network. So I think that's why I was in every church and mosque and synagogue, because the inner and outer visual worlds were all getting unfixated and merging. So it was really interesting that the fear level, like I say, it was like paralytic, incandescent terror, just slowly sort of like, I don't know, like seaweed in a tide pool just moving through my whole body. And it was like, you know, it was scary, but it was blissful at the same time. So that was my morning.

# Shinzen's "Dharma-Free" Funny Story of his Car Accident while on LSD

My ears are asymmetrical, there's just no way around it.

Get him to tell you that story. You know how my ears got asymmetrical? I'm not sure there's any deep dharma to it. I was in a car accident a long, long time ago. We flipped over in a little sports car. I was a passenger, we got sucked under a truck.

It can actually happen, it's like a triumph. It's a very, very light car. We were going from San Francisco to LA. There's no dharma in this story, okay? Is there any dharma in this story? Can I make it into it? You can make it into it. No, there's no dharma. This was before I was into meditation. It was like way, way back in the crazy days. Me and my friend were driving back from San Francisco to LA. He just bought this car. I didn't want to use the safety belt.

It may have been back when it still wasn't mandatory. He says, no, there's no way that we're going to drive without having that seat belt on. So I put it on. He was in a normal state of consciousness. I had decided to be in an altered state.

Highly altered. It was back in the day. We were living in Haight-Ashbury, so you get the general idea here. What did you take? Huh? What did you take? Wow.

Wow. I haven't heard this one. There's no dharma in this story. It's just like a weird story.

I can't put a spin on it to be of any value to you. It's just, God, he did crazy shit. So, yeah, it's like a couple hours down from San Francisco. We just got sucked under a truck and then skidded out and fishtailed and then flipped over and over again and landed upside down. And of course, the only reason I'm still here is that I have the safety because otherwise I would have just been out. So, yeah, I'm just sort of tripping out. I see you're liking this story.

It's not going anywhere. You can find a little dharma. Yeah, it's like things are getting, you know, the electrical poles were like becoming little sci-fi movies. And then there's sort of like this rumble. And then the next thing, it was just nothing.

It was like I have complete retroactive amnesia. I was just, there was this rumble and the next thing I'm looking up at a highway patrolman. And he's like, you're right on. And my friend comes over and he's all bloody and everything. And he said, we had an accident. And I think I said, am I OK? And then I passed out. And then the next thing, I'm like in an ER. And this doctor is looking down at me and he says, your ear has been torn off, but don't worry, we can sew it back on. But mind you, the LSD trip is still happening. It did not stop. I don't want you to turn into a bad trip. It never did.

It was never a bad trip. I said, oh, great, OK. But I wasn't a meditator. I just got lucky, I guess. I didn't freak out.

And then apparently my friend, the guy that was driving, who eventually became an MD himself, actually, but he told me that we lucked out because the guy was a really good surgeon. And you can't tell that, you know, it's like you couldn't quite tell which one it was, but you could still see the scar here. So there were some funny parts, like my friend came up, he spoke Japanese. He was American. I mean, he was non-Asian, but we'd been in Japan together. So he says to me in Japanese, don't worry that the doctor's looking right in your eyes, because with head trauma your eyes dilate anyway.

They're not going to know. So he's sneaking me this secret message in Japanese in front of the doctor. So I said, OK, good. And it was actually something pretty funny. So I had to be in the hospital, but then they let me out the next day. I really lucked out because it freaking totaled the car. I completely destroyed the car and neither of us sustained any significant injury. And my friend had the presence of mind to bury all the drugs by the roadside. Despite the fact that he thought he had killed me. I was just hanging there, unconscious, because the car was upside down. Not a serene scene, apparently.

I have blessedly no memory of this at all. So they keep you in the hospital, and I'm just laying there at night, and I'm just peaking. I'm looking at the ceiling, and it's like flowers are blooming. Well, there's the Dharma, OK, expansion and contraction.

It was very evident. I couldn't get to sleep, right? So I called the nurse, and I can't get to sleep. Just give me something to help me get to sleep. She says, oh, no, in cases of head trauma like this, we never want you to be on any drugs. I said, OK, OK, let's watch the movie for a few more hours.

Actually, I fell asleep. That's how I got asymmetrical ears. But actually, I can work Dharma into this in a very minor way, which is after that, I started to have something. There was no untoward consequences of this, apparently, other than my parents pretty much freaked out when I called them.

But it was OK. At the clinical EEG, they checked out everything. But I did start to have something happen that has subsequently happened from that time on, which is, and it was probably a consequence of this. I don't know, but there's something called sleep paralysis. You probably experienced it where you really think you're awake, and you can't move.

And then all sorts of, sometimes some very weird stuff happens. Some people get Kundalini rising. They call it the exploding head syndrome. I've had that happen many times during the sleep paralysis.

It's like someone sheared off a fire hydrant, if you've ever seen what that looks like, except it's going up your spine and blasting out of the top of your head. So I started to have occasionally those kinds of experiences. But the really weird things were I would have experiences where I thought I was awake and things had happened in the real world. I mean, I absolutely was convinced they had happened. But then when I checked reality with all people, they hadn't happened. So I was having dreams that were so vivid that they completely fooled me.

And that was a little bit weird. And then, so some of you, if you've ever had this sleep paralysis, then you know what I'm talking about. Now, what's happened over the years is I eventually did start to meditate, but the sleep paralysis thing still happens. But it's completely different because now I'm lucid.

I know it's happening and I know I'm a meditator. And so I can play with it. And I don't play with it. I just meditate in it and sort of explore it as an altered state. But in addition to the exploding head syndrome and the dreaming that is so vivid, that really sort of alters your sense of what might be reality. Like, let's just imagine if in 10 seconds you suddenly find yourself in bed and someone's waking you up saying you had a dream you were at a meditation retreat.

Just imagine how jarring that would be. So that happened a lot of times. And that was sort of interesting because once again, I hadn't meditated yet, so I didn't have a context for this kind of thing. But it really does make you think, like, maybe this is just one really big dream.

So anyway, that's... And the other cool thing is I completely understand alien abductions. I have been abducted by aliens. It's happened several times. And it's a classic.

I mean, the whole classic thing, they're gibbering in some extraterrestrial language. And yes, it's true. It's true. I've experienced it myself several times. They do probes. Yes, I can confirm. And it is what they say.

It's that place that gets probed. The one little difference is, you think I'm making this up? It's happened any number of times. But the one difference is I know it's happening in sleep paralysis.

I don't think. But it's very, very vivid. It's actually the origin, this sleep paralysis and then weird shit happening with you being, like, violated, or in some way, like, being touched in a way you don't want to be touched, et cetera, et cetera. That is the origin of the word nightmare.

Originally, well, night is night. What the hell is a mare? It's not a female equine species. A mare is a demon, and it may even be cognate to the Sanskrit word mara. I'm not quite sure about that, which is demons or devils in Buddhism. The original nightmare was an experience of an incubus or a succubus.

These are, like, creatures that sit on your chest, or they prod you or bite you or do weird things that are, like, very uncomfortable. And this goes back centuries and centuries. You can look it up, succubus and incubus. Those were the Latin terms for it. But nightmare was the Anglo-Saxon. So this sort of being paralyzed in sleep and having weird stuff happening, that's – there's a lot of cultural references to it. But each age interprets it differently. So in the Middle Ages, where people were superstitious in the Christian sense, they thought it was devils and things like that.

And nowadays people sort of have archetypes of sci-fi and space opera, so they experience it as an alien abduction. So I know that I'm just in sleep paralysis. I don't believe it's actually happening, but it's very, very vivid. It's as vivid as anything. But I don't know if this is true for other people, but I can tell you that when – as I'm waking up, as I'm waking up from this, I could actually watch the transition between the two realities, the one where there's these aliens and they're doing this anal probe thing, okay, and then coming back to the current physical reality. And I don't know if it's other people, it's the same or not, or this is just me. But as I'm coming back to ordinary reality, the experience of the anal probe becomes the experience of detecting my pulse in that region of my body. So apparently that's a slightly uncomfortable sensation if you're in a vulnerable sleep-like state and it gets interpreted. At least that's my experience.

And it's always that. I can detect my pulse there. It has a physical basis. And I guess it's just a very sensitive region that when you're in a sleep state – Yeah, Louie's finding this hilarious. Has it happened to you? I refuse to talk about it. I know, it's very painful. It's hard to talk about. I can't reveal the source of my laughter.

I can't reveal why I'm laughing. I see. Well, I tell you, I'm going to check to see if you've got a zipper back here. That you're just wearing a human suit of your love. Come to think of it, that seems plausible.

I remember you from somewhere. Well, that is not a Dharma talk. But they say you should tell stories. That's how my ears got asymmetrical and how my mind got maybe commensurately warped. I don't know.

## Shinzen, the Mindful Math Geek

You have often called yourself a geek.

I don't want to call you a geek unless you've already done it. Have you always been a math science person? No, actually I did extraordinarily poorly in math and science in school. I hated it and it was a source of huge consternation in my family when I would come back with D's and F's in junior high and high school. My dad was good at math and he liked it. They expected me to perform well in school, but I did poorly in general in school and particularly poorly in the area of the math and science classes. So when I would get home, there'd be a shitstorm around my report cards. So actually, initially I hated it, like I guess a lot of people do, and I did poorly in it.

Very poorly in it, actually. And I had a lot of emotional scarrings around that in my life. What do you mean? Well I had a lot of self-doubt and anger and fear and sadness, emotions around my inability to be able to understand these subjects.

And how did you go from that to delight at scribbling mathematical formulas on a piece of paper as you do now? Well, first there was a motivation. I had a conjecture way back in the early 70s that something stunningly important could come about if the best of the East and the best of the West were to mate and cross-fertilize. The best of the East is the internal science of meditation, especially in my opinion, mindfulness, which in many ways shares the methodology of science. You divide and conquer, you break things into their elements, you see how they interact.

It's very quantifiable, actually. So it occurred to me, having reached the peak of Asia, the pinnacle of that culture, which is the internal science of meditation, what peak remains? Well, if we look at the landscape of all of human culture, the only comparably impressive peak is Western science. So I wanted to study Western science when I came back from the monastery because I knew that I would meditate my whole life. And I felt that sometime in the future, the dialogue between Western science and Eastern practice would become important in human history. And I wanted to be able to participate in that, not merely as an expositor of meditation, but as somebody who knew something about Western science. So when I got back, providentially, I met someone who was very good at math and science.

And he gave me one really good piece of advice. He said, if you want to master the sciences, do the math first. If you ace that, you can do any class. You can do physics, you can do chemistry, you can do biochemistry, you can do neuroscience, but you have to be able to do calculus and topology and other branches of mathematics. So I got this good piece of advice, which is really master math, and then you'll be able to ace your science courses.

The only better piece of advice I would give somebody is learn to meditate because that will allow you to undo all the previous conditionings you had around math and science and be good at it. And I'm living proof that that can happen. I used my meditation, since I had a motivation now, okay, I'm going to apply my meditation practice to doing something I am absolutely convinced I'm incapable of doing and have a lot of emotional baggage around. So I'm absolutely convinced I can't do this and I've got the high school and junior high records to prove it, okay, and I've got all these emotions from my family around it. So how am I going to use the meditation to overcome this? Three things.

Meditation gives you concentration power. When I was a kid, I'd read the math book, I'd read a paragraph, I didn't understand it. I tried to read it again, I didn't understand it.

I read it again, I didn't understand it, I gave up. I didn't have concentration power. So now as a meditator, I have concentration power. So I kept coming back and coming back. I had

staying power. That made a huge difference.

I didn't give up on the third time. That's 100% through concentration. So I had improved concentration, that helped. Then, well, I had the conviction I can't do it. But where does that come up? That comes up in mental image, internal talk, and emotional type body sensations.

Every time that would come up, I'd break it up into manageable pieces and just observe it over and over and over again, it came up. Well, who are you kidding? You'll never be able to do this shit. You've never been able to do this shit. Every time it comes up, divide and conquer, you quantumize, love it to death. I loved that conviction and the emotions to death.

Meaning I so affirmed them that they no longer needed to happen. Then another little meditative skill is the ability to merge with another person. So I started to merge with mathematicians and incorporate within myself the waveform called math geek. There is an activity called math geek, a kind of wave. I internalized that into my personality wave so that I had a mathematician inside of me.

Actually a lot of them. I did that intentionally. Now the cool thing about math is, oh well, let me just say, what I've just talked about, okay the claim, well you had better concentration so you're going to be able to learn this stuff. You had these emotional deconstruction skills so you could free yourself from the influence of the past.

And the very weird claim that you can merge with another person and internalize an actual ability from that person. I can make these claims, okay, but when I sit down to solve a problem, when I sit down to solve a differential equation, I will either be able to do that or not. If I've been bullshitting myself, it's going to show. On the other hand, if I can solve a system of differential equations, okay, without looking at the answers, then I know I actually did this.

So there's no BS involved here. And your enjoyment of it has shifted. Well yes, and it worked.

You enjoy differential equations. Yeah, it worked. I started to actually be able to get the answers. I had to start with elementary that you would learn in grade school. I had to start with multiplication and addition tables.

I knew nothing. And now I do topology and category theory and homological algebra and stuff that you would do in graduate school, math courses. That is 100% self-taught and applying the meditation. And you know it's not BS because you can do it. And yes, that becomes this huge source of joy.



## SHINZEN' s 75th SURPRISE BIRTHDAY PARTY

I'm going to show you these.

You're going to see some people that you haven't seen. I see. Oh my God.

I mean, wow, from this far? Okay, well, I'll try to process all this. Thank you for showing up and for what you do. What can I say? Does this mean we're not doing the training? Something else is happening. There was no training.

It is all about your 75th birthday. That's self-righting. I'm off the hook then.

So what about these facilitators? Okay, well, here we go. It was a ruse. Yeah. You know what? In the back of my mind, I had a little... No, he did. Yes, he did.

Well, because it's a big number and it's been known to happen. So anyway, but then when we came up here for lunch, there was not this. So I thought, oh, okay, good. My life will be simple.

So it worked in the sense that no, I didn't expect it. But it's great to see you all and get to know each other. Not all of you know each other. You come from all sorts of places and periods and whatever. Some people here really go back. Yeah. It's like talk to people. Yeah, I wish everyone could see.

## Shinzen' s Contributions

What is unique and important? When I look at the different kinds of things that I like to teach, I'll sometimes ask myself, what is unique and important? Are there some things I've come up with that no one came up with and that may be important historically? I think there are. One is the notion that three attentional skills, concentration, clarity, equanimity, as I've defined them, give you everything that you need with no extra baggage to completely analyze any form of contemplative-based psychospiritual growth and also to compare all historical traditions of contemplative-based psychospiritual growth. You can analyze every single path in terms of the extent to which and the way in which, if at all, it talks about each one of these skills. That is like a three-dimensional analysis that can be used both for the practical of an individual's meditation practice but also as a framework for a systematic theory of world mysticism.

I think that's probably important and it's unique, I think. Another thing is what I just mentioned, realizing that mental image, mental talk, and body emotion work together as a system. What I essentially have done is take the early Buddhist idea, something that goes back either to the Buddha or to just a few centuries after the Buddha, something very associated with Theravada, which is the notion that if you untangle the strands of self, you get free. Well, I'm going to claim that inner Sikhir feel represents the most tangible and simplest way to implement that divide and conquer or untangle and be free. Furthermore, that it probably maps onto functional neuroanatomy and therefore could be the basis, once again, for a biophysical theory of enlightenment sometime in the future. So that's important. There's one other thing, which is if you want to look for a biological basis for enlightenment, I'm going to make a guess.

This is just a guess. I might whistle another tune in a year or two, but I'm going to, for the record, say, look at the basal ganglia. Okay, so that could be the single most important thing I ever said in my life. Or not. We'll see.

## SILENT 33 MINUTE MEDITATION ~ led by SHINZEN YOUNG

In hope he feels, not just in theJakethought, but deeply forever in himself. Its feeling of being bell.....

## SILENT 5 MINUTE SIT ~ with Shinzen Young & Stephanie Nash

You..... eight, nine, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27,  
28,.....

# Spacing Out & Resistance are Golden Opportunities ~ SHINZEN

## YOUNG

Yes? So using that, which is how I mostly meditate, usually between one of the techniques I space out. Often that will happen. And I'm not in a good place to figure out what to do next, during that space out period, when I realize I've spaced out. So what I've been doing is picking something, having something already set in mind that if I find a space out... That's great. That's a clever strategy. But also, you know my standard thing, as soon as you get the hint that you're spacing out, if possible, what? What do you do? I'll give you the hint.

S.L. Spoken labels. It's not so much a matter of I'm spaced out, oh, I've got to find a new technique. It's I'm spaced out, I've got to use my options with this technique. So let's continue on this, because I know that, and that often comes to mind, and I don't want to.

I wish I felt stronger to work with that, so usually I'll just go back to that beginning technique. Okay. So let me put a positive spin on I don't want to.

That's my job, basically, is to show that actually everything is a window of opportunity. The I don't want to. What's positive about the I just don't want to? Resistant thing.

Okay. Well, you're spacing out, right? It means that the concentration isn't good. It means that the attention is being scattered, and we want to gradually train ourselves so that our attention isn't scattered. But what's difficult is that what's scattering attention is not tangible.

There's an intangible force that is scattering your attention, and you're at the mercy of it as long as it's intangible. Now, here's why the I just don't want to use spoken labels is a window of opportunity, because if you do speak the labels, you're going to not feel good in subjective space. The speaking of the labels is going to be uncomfortable. That's why you don't want to do it, and forcing yourself to do it will make you uncomfortable. Why is that good? Because the invisible forces that were controlling you now have come up as tangible sensations in the body that are penetratable. Okay? And so you go to focus in or focus on feel, feel in, and you force yourself to do the spoken labels, and you apply it to how uncomfortable you are speaking the labels. And that then allows you to work through those forces in a tangible way. So I wasn't being facetious or cavalier when I said that actually it is actually a window of opportunity to work through the driving forces of scatteredness. So if you're willing to do it, you're going to really develop concentration power effectively.

If you're not willing to do it, it's petty-wise and powerful. You feel a little better during the set, but you're not really deeply training the skills. So that's my little motivational spiel for SL, spoken labels. Yes? Well, just to piggyback on that, this morning I spent the first and second SID. I was really tired from that morning. And so I used labels that were mouth. Yeah, you used sotto voce.

That is not nearly as difficult for me anyway to do as spoken labels, and it was completely effective. It was really good. You whispered the words. Not even whispered. You sub-vocalized. You just moved your lips.

Just lips. And so there's that, but also I have to tell you, I looked through the manual, and you don't have any place where you describe the three different ways of labeling, the four different ways of labeling. That's in the next edition. That is the biggest lacuna in there, which I realized in my horror soon after we brought out this. What's wrong with this picture? The central technique is not fully described.

Now, there is the how to note it label on the paper, but we forgot to put it into the manual. So, yeah, it's like the thousand pound elephant in the room. So I am poignantly aware of that.

Thank you. Yes. This thing you were describing about the self-resistance and you stop undying, I'm not sure you understood what you're doing. You're stopping undying in the character.

Well, what happens is, yes, I went through it fast, so thanks for asking. So we sometimes are aware of just that there are like forces driving us, in our behaviors, driving us to think, driving us to talk, driving us to move. And it's like force. It's just a force that's making me do it. And it's intangible in the sense that I can't locate it in time and space or give any quality to it other than say it's a force.

Follow what I'm saying? Nothing mysterious so far, right? Okay, so how can we make these invisible, intractable forces tangible and tractable so that we can actually penetrate them and work them through? Well, they have to come up to, percolate up to tangibility. The way they percolate up to tangibility is through abstinence. Okay? If you abstain from X, then what's been driving you to do X is going to come to the surface.

It's going to come to the surface as image, talk, emotional body, sometimes physical body too. This is true for any addiction recovery situation, whether it's recovery from a substance or recovery from compulsive thinking or recovery from life. The ultimate recovery program.

Break the addiction to life and death. It's called liberation. But the same is true, okay? The same principle holds. You have to abstain in order for what's been driving it to come up and be tangible as image, talk, body. Okay? So when that happens, now you can apply a technique. So the situation that Pam was describing is, well, I space out. And that's a habit. I space out. And I know that I should go to the spoken labels, but I don't want to do it.

So that's another habit. Not wanting to do the spoken labels. So what I said is, well, let me put a positive spin on that situation. If you force yourself, if you abstain from not speaking the labels, okay? So in this case, it's a do the behavior thing. If you do that behavior, you're going to feel uncomfortable. Well, we don't want to feel uncomfortable in general, but actually in this case we do.

Because whatever comes up in image, talk, and emotional body of I hate this, or, you know, you get bang here, bang here, bang here. That represents the forces that were driving those behaviors. But now those forces are not invisible forces. They're tangible sensations. They're tangible visual, auditory, and somatic experiences. Well, what is tangible can be quantumized and can be experienced completely, can be penetrated. Therefore, what is tangible is trackable, meaning that we can apply a mindfulness technique to it. Things are intangible, they're not trackable, okay? So there's little we can do other than white knuckle. But what is tangible is trackable, meaning you can note it. What is trackable is tractable, means you can get a handle on it. So that's the mechanism that I was describing with regards to why you, what's going to happen if you force yourself to speak the labels and why that's a good thing kind of thing. So that's the same as stopping at a dime? It's very related. Because when you stop on a dime in daily life, then the juices that have been stirred up by life come up with a vengeance very quickly. And if you can be Johnny on the spot with it, you can actually meditate retroactively. You say, well, I thought that's against the rules.

You can't do that. Let's say that you're bopping around in the world and you're just like a whirling dervish and you're going here, going there. No techniques, no awareness. And I'm going to really face what's been stirred up. In that ten minutes, if you really bring your A game, you can retroactively process all those hours of unconscious freneticness. And that's the rhythm of the Zen day. Unlike a vipassana training day, the Zen day is run around like crazy, stop on a dime.

Run around like crazy, stop on a dime. At least Rinzai Zen. Soto Zen not so much.

But Rinzai Zen, absolutely. Run around like crazy, stop on a dime. Run around like crazy, stop on a dime. All day. Now that's either going to make you just frenetic as hell or you're going to learn what I just said.

Which is like when you're running around like crazy and then you stop on a dime, you can process all that crazy very, very quickly. So yes, it's related. It sounds like a version of asceticism. Well asceticism is a generic term. So there are many facets to asceticism.

That could be one of them, yes. Well when I was running my restaurants, I would every hour go out and sit on the bench in front of the restaurant, the bus stop bench, for five minutes. And I found the great advantage of that, stopping like that, is that then at the end of the day you haven't built up a whole lot of samskaras. You periodically let go of them so that you're much calmer at the end of the day. That's my peppering. That's a great specific example.

# Taking Temperature of Subconscious Processing ~ SHINZEN

## YOUNG

One of my favorite jokes, well not jokes, but just funny things that I'll ask someone is, do you think that, like you look at a neon light bulb, neon, or that kind of thing, you can touch it, right? It's cold.

But I'll say, do you believe me that the temperature inside that neon bulb is comparable to the temperature in the core of the sun? Most people would say, no way, right? But actually it is. The thing is, there just aren't very many molecules in there. So it doesn't transfer much heat to you. But they're plasma. They're like they're on the sun.

They're moving that fast. But it has very little density. So you touch it, they don't transfer hardly any heat to you at all. So you have no perception of how really much energy there is on average. But like I say, high average kinetic energy. But if you don't have a lot of particles, then the total energy they're going to transfer to the surface of that bulb is not very much.

So anyway, end of physics lesson. What is the metaphor? Well, you'll recall that Freud thought of the psyche in terms of pressures, because that was sort of the physics of the day. What I find interesting is that if you parse your mental experience into a visual component, which would be mental images, and an auditory component, which would be mental talk, when you start to do that, you're aware of images. A lot of times they vanish right away.

You're aware of talk. Sometimes it just vanishes. But at some point, that sort of surface activity tends to go away. But the space, image space, is still there.

Talk space is still there. And when you tune into image space or talk space, sometimes you're aware of a kind of subtle undercurrent of motion, like there's a kind of stirring in talk space. You may or may not be able to make out words.

You may or may not be able to make out what the conversation is about. But there's a sort of undercurrent of activation. And there's something analogous to that in image space. And there can also be something analogous to that in your emotional centers.

You're not actually experiencing any emotion per se, but it's like there's something sort of idling down there. So what is that? A lot of times people will sort of look upon that as a problem. It's like, I can't get rid of that sort of undercurrent of something going on down there. Well what that is, is subconscious visual thought, subconscious auditory thought, and subliminal emotional sensation. And if you explore your inner space, image space, talk space, emotional body space, after the surface stuff is sort of dissipated, and you're watching that general level of stirring down there, sometimes it's uniform. It just sort of is at a constant pace.

Other times it sort of speeds up and then subsides, sort of bursts and then subsides. So although you're not aware of the specific content necessarily of the subconscious, you are monitoring, by monitoring that general level of activation. Do you see the metaphor? You're taking the temperature of the subconscious. You're monitoring sort of metaphorically the average kinetic energy that's going on. And if the temperature is more or less constant, it's all sort of at the same frequency, then what's optimal is to evenly cover subjective space and just let your awareness sort of soak into that whole field.



And what that's going to tend to do is break up the, it's going to lessen the viscosity. So density, viscosity, temperature, entropy, these are called state variables. And these are sort of the, this is the great achievement of 19th century physics.

One of the great achievements is statistical thermodynamics. So there are these state variables. So if it's more or less like an even level of vibratory activity, then you sort of cover the whole space. You soak awareness into it.

You don't try to figure out what's going on. You give it permission to just sort of move around down there. And you'll find that that will cause that system to become more and more fluid, meaning less and less viscous. On the other hand, if you notice pattern that it sort of activates and then deactivates, so it sort of like heats up and then suddenly cools off, metaphorically. What's optimal in that case is to watch the sort of burst of energy and then detect the gone and briefly look down the valley where those little bubbles went to, because they're pointing right to nirvana, right to cessation.

So you get gone, gone, gone, gone. If it gives you that pattern, then get interested in the rhythm of arising, passing, arising, passing. But this is subtle vibration, sort of shimmering and then dying away. And when that foam sort of dies away, the silence that it points to is the absolute rest, the still point of the turning world.

So there's a metaphor from good old 19th century physics. I mentioned that, so in my mind, I think of this as, well, how cool is this? If Freud had only known you can actually take the temperature in real time of the subconscious mind. And in doing so, the viscosity of the subconscious gets worked through.

And when the subconscious self, the psyche, this inner see, hear, feel self, when it flows, it gets creative and liberated. So that's one of my favorite metaphors, taking the temperature of the unconscious in real time as a function of space. Temperature of this room is what a scientist would call a scalar field. It means, or a time varying scalar field, means at each point in the space of this room, there's a physical quantity that can be measured by one real number, which is temperature. And it's a temperature field, a scalar field that varies with time. So the subconscious is actually analogous to a temperature field, because it has location. There's the visual part, the auditory part, the emotional body part, and so forth.

# Teaching "Turn Back" (or UM's Self-Inquiry) Practice ~ SHINZEN

YOUNG

Hi, I'm Devin. How are you? It's been a while. There you are.

Here I am. So, I want to say how I love the use of language to point to experience. And yet, a couple of days ago, Juliana was guiding, what is it, now it's see, hear, feel, back, as opposed to self.

And there was an interesting way in which she was guiding this. It was a reverse. It was instantaneous.

It was like a pinprick. It was the opposite of gone. And that was a different way for me to kind of hear that being presented with language. And my first thought was how you must be enjoying the symmetry of that being the opposite of gone.

Because how many times do we talk about it? You go, if there's no symmetry, there's beauty in symmetry. So, I did kind of go, oh, Shenzhen must really be loving that. But I also said, when we're doing turn back, as opposed to gone, we have to kind of break through that sense of observing self in a way we don't with gone. And what was really interesting to me about...

It's true. And so, what I liked about the quick, she'd say, quick stab at the past, and also it was the past. It wasn't, oh, I think there was a mention of reversing the direction of where you see perception coming from, but this notion of it being past in time.

Of course, we've got our time-space metaphor there. But I was kind of interested in this languaging and how it helped get to a certain experience. But I've had an experience with this technique that I'd like to help guide people to. And what I thought this was helpful for was when I first did this technique, which was you and I had a conversation about 21 years ago where you were talking about the koan you used, like who am I.

And you gave me privately, I had a koan, who is... It was looking, listening, and feeling. It was a different time. And who was, we could say now, see, hear, feeling. And the moment I would ask the question, there would be this separation of not just observer and subject, but of self and observer. So the observer was kind of back here or up somewhere, and I came to you and you went, yeah, yeah, yeah, but look at that observer. The observer is just what we would now call see, hear, feel, or talk, image, feel is what you said then.

Yeah, but the observer is just talk, image, feel. And I broke that apart and went, yeah, there really isn't anything there. And then every time I asked the question, instead of it being this instant separation that had this lovely equanimity in the middle, instead of that, now there was a, there wasn't an observer. There was more of an abiding in an aware, an empty awareness. And from which, and there was an abiding. It wasn't a quick jab. It was an abiding. And so what I was interested in that kind of reverse, like Julianne would go reverse, reverse, and that to me tended to take people to that first thing that I experienced. And I have a lot of students and clients who get that.

Oh, the observer is back here. And if I say, yeah, but it's really just, you know, if I try to tell them what you told me, everyone doesn't have the chops to do that. And I wondered if you had some languaging that's as effective as the, hey, like gone, like reverse, to help people kind of drop into an, which is my experience of it. It's kind of an abiding. It isn't a quick, it's a, oh, yeah, I can hang out there.

So that's my question. What's good in languaging to help people or are you assuming that once they kind of do that, they'll just fall in? The way that I typically treat this issue is in a sense to sidestep it, but not really. I'll explain. So the broader perspective on this kind of thing is that different languagings of a certain direction that someone would like to point, who's a coach, teacher, different languagings work for different people at different times. So that's just something to know as a general principle. It means on one hand, it's good to try a range of ways of describing things, although that can be also confusing to people, but it's a shotgun approach.

Something hopefully lands. That's one way to go about it. The it meaning deal with the issue that there are often many ways to describe something and for a given individual at a given time, one might have a stronger effect. Another way to deal with the issue is to say that when you do a technique, the technique is one thing. It has a focus range, it has an instruction set, there's a way of describing the technique. Technique is one thing. The kinds of experience that a given individual at a given time has when doing a technique may have when they do a technique.

That varies from person to person, time to time. And that's actually different from the technique. So you can describe, here's the technique. Here's how it works.

Here are some of the challenges. And then you can say as a general principle, if we look at a lot of people over a long period of time, there are some experiences that people tend to go through with this technique. And yes, there is a trend with time. But you may go back and forth, we're just going to sensitize you to these experiences. And then with, we're talking about the turn back technique. This is the standard sequence, but we're very careful in the language we say, we don't say you're going to go through this or you have to go through this but often people go through, when we look over the long term of practice, decades, often people will go through a progression.

Typically, with turn back type family. The first is, what are you asking me to do. I don't understand the instructions. That's usually where it starts, because it's not it's a hazy, it's a finger pointing to a hazy. Try as you might. And here's the great thing. The great thing is any number of our coaches are better at it than I am. They just got the knack for doing that, but it's hard to put into words. So that's the first experience, WTF.

What are you asking me to do here. And at some point. Hopefully, you get a sense of it.

In between. I don't know what you're talking about, and I've got a sense of it may be some false learning where you think there's an actual verbal answer that you're going to bring to the teacher. And then you get this clever thing that I thought of.

No, no, no. And then you get the hang of it. You get a sense of it, and then you get that sense of.

There's a witness back here, typically, and it has equanimity so now you're getting equanimity. You're not fixated in space, and then you have to turn back to that from that and turn back from that and go through a sequence until you're unfixated in space, while your eyes are open, taking care of business. And at that point, you have true non dual awareness. There's a non duality between the formless source, and the trillion forms of life of daily life embodied life. And you can point out a sequence of states that they will likely experience. So when those things happen, they're prepared.

You can even do sensitizing exercises that may help that happen. Are we good stuff is this enough for now. Thank you. I appreciate it. Thank you.

## The Agony of Jargon ~ Shinzen Young

We have to deal with the agony of jargon here, because different teachers use different languaging for identical phenomena, and different teachers use identical words for entirely different phenomena. And there's just no way around that. It just is, because everybody sort of develops their own whatever. So it is hugely confusing to people, and I really feel sorry for anyone that hasn't done 30 or 40 years of practice, because it takes 30 or 40 years to see when two people are using the same words for something completely different, and when they're using very different words for something completely the same. It just takes a long time, typically, to develop that kind of sense, that clarity. Now, I don't think this situation is going to go on for many more decades, certainly not for more than a century or two, because we're now dialoguing, the teachers dialogue. They didn't in the old days, everybody had their own feudal domain, and they were just like lords of a castle, and they didn't do open peer-to-peer dialoguing in public, or if anything happened in public, it was just a debate where they were trying to trounce the other guy. And even the Buddha, look at the Buddhist literature, it's just the Buddha defeating one person after another after another with his paradigm. That's what it is. That's what the Pali Canon is about.

It's not him talking to other people peer-to-peer, okay? But now things are different. Now there's a different spirit, the spirit of science, the spirit of collegial cooperation, and that will probably gain momentum in the next hundred years or so. And probably we won't have this agony of jargon and seemingly conflicting maps and claims and so forth.

But right now, you're at the awkward intermediate period of history. So let me just try to make it as simple as possible. If Daniel or Kenneth says AP, read that as both gone, of Shinsen, end of story. Okay? We just, for whatever reasons, have this different language of things. So that may help clarify a little bit. So that deep experience of space spreading and collapsing, as soon as it's arising, okay, that's your AP experiences. And one way to, that means arising, passing in the jargon of some teachers.

It corresponds to Udayavya in Pali, and it is mentioned, definitely mentioned in the Pali Canon. And probably in a sense, pretty similar to what those contemporary teachers use it. One way to measure, you know, there's lots of ways to measure progress. See, now in early Buddhism, they measured progress in terms of working through craving, aversion, and unconsciousness.

That's the different, you know, stream enterer, once returner, non-returner, arhat, and so forth. That's one metric. There's an alternate metric called the ten oxerting pictures. That gives you a picture of about 50 years of practice from the first picture to the eighth, seventh picture. It's hard to see that those two maps correspond to exactly the same thing.

You don't see they have anything in common. Another way to measure progress is, for how long through what kind of intensity can you have an experience of both gone or rising, passing? That's another way to measure progress. So, I don't know if that's of any help.

## The ETERNAL FOUNTAIN of YOUTH ~ Shinzen Young

Sometimes people say, hey, Shifton, you've got a label for the moment of vanishing, gone. What's wrong? Why don't you have a label for the moment of arising? I do. I absolutely have a label for the moment of arising that we use in when we do the expanse in contraction flow. The moment of arising at a very deep, deep level of understanding.

The moment of arising is the moment when the space of that experience simultaneously comes into existence and begins going out of existence. My label for that is both. Both expansion and contraction. They've pulled apart and they are molding the present moment. Both gone. Both gone. Both gone.

Both gone. You sum up all those boths and gons and you have a giant eternal fountain of youth that is always simultaneously spreading and collapsing and pervaded with the absolute tranquility of a trillion vanishings. To the extent that you have become that, that there's been a figure of ground reversing. That instead of thinking about that or observing that, you actually participate in that. Well, that's an eternal fountain of youth. So to that extent, you become that. Your personal death is much less of an issue.

Because by personal death you mean the death of a mind and body. But to the extent that you've re-identified with the flow of the source, that's not going to go away. So quote you will never go away.

To that extent. And to the extent that there's been a figure of ground reversal and instead of observing it, it's been gone, there's just gone and things come and go from it. Well to that extent you won't actually notice the difference between being alive and being dead. And as strange as that sounds, that means that you won't have to die. Your body and mind will have to pass away, but you won't have to die.

# The Figure/Ground Reversal from Noting Vanishings ~ SHINZEN

YOUNG

I have a question about just now. I have been doing that practice a lot the last few days. And at first it just sounded very fulfilling and rewarding noticing bad things. And I guess starting yesterday and more so this morning, more and more I am attracted to vanishings where the intervals are shorter and shorter and shorter.

You mean the intervals between the vanishings get shorter? No, no, no. Either hearing or seeing or feeling where you are getting closer to a vibration. Well it started yesterday where I would be hearing intervals, for example, in a bird chirping where it would begin with I could mentally know gone and then something so fast where I could barely mentally know gone. And ultimately I am aware of gone-ness because I can hear the vibration and the chirping but I don't have the sensory clarity to know gone. Well, that's your sensory clarity that you are aware that there is this continuous gone-ness and then every once in a while you get more noticeable macro-gones that will punctuate the continuous micro-gone. So that is your sensory clarity is to be detecting that in addition to the macro-gones occasionally.

And that's something that I refer to in the manual as the figure ground reversal. That's what's beginning to happen is gone is less something you are observing and more something that's always there and it's the observer that's coming and going. That's a huge shift in one's practice. That's basically the shift from observing the self to manifesting the self. That was my next question. I was in the Pacific before the break.

I was noting gone on a, I don't know if it was in the room or in my ear, but basically a vibratory hum in which I could detect gone-ness again until I noted it and it felt more like presence than absence. Yeah, yeah, that's right. Right. That's exactly, that's the figure ground reversal that I refer to in the manual as one of the possible things that can happen as you're doing it. Basically the intervals of something-ness between vanishings, they get shorter and in between there's less and less something-ness until if there's anything in between the gones it's just both. There's in-out flow, gone, in-out flow, gone, in-out flow, gone, and the cleft is like the black hole. It polarizes but it just then re-collapses to the black hole and doesn't decide to do a big bang and make a universe..

## The Great Dharma of "Row Row Row Your Boat" ~Shinzen Young

This was fantastic.

I love this. What's your take on this kitty-ditty? Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream, Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream. I learned it in my earliest school years, but I can't get it out of my mind. Do you suppose that my elementary teachers might have been latent Buddhists? So what that is, is that's the wisdom function within you. Seeing in popular literature the deeper dharma meaning.

That's really good. They once did, I suppose it's actually been done a lot of times, but I know of one study that was done by a colleague of mine at Harvard Medical School many years ago, where they gave Rorschach tests to a bunch of mindfulness meditators. You know about this study, Dan Brown. Not the Dan Brown that wrote the Da Vinci Code. The Buddhist Dan.

It's a different person. So what they did is, it's like, okay, let's do psychometrics on monks. You know, Southeast Asian, I guess it was Southeast Asian monks.

I don't remember the cohort specifically. And they were graded by years of experience. And there were a couple of them that were reputedly enlightened. Okay, that were real senior adepts.

And what they found was that the senior adepts did something with the Rorschach that had never been recorded in the entire history of Rorschach. And lots of people have taken these. It's the inkblot test, right? You know what it is. You've probably taken it.

Certainly seen it on TV. So what they found among the reputed arhats was that what had never been recorded previously is, not only did every inkblot appear to contain some Dharma principle, but the sequence of inkblots, no matter how they presented the sequence, became a coherent sequence of Dharma talks. So they concluded that something really major had changed the way that these people see the world. Okay, it's like everything is the Dharma. You know, a Marvel comic book is the Dharma.

So row, row, row your boat, it's absolutely the secret of enlightenment. It's right in there. It's obvious. You're right. They were crypto Buddhists, every single one of them. Or maybe we're just seeing it in a certain way.

You can take your choice. So what is this song about? What does my Dharma eye see in this song? Row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream. So what's the stream? Well, that's sort of interesting. The Buddha said that what we're doing is patisottagamini-madga, that we are on the path that is against the stream. That's where the name of the group comes from, against the stream.

Okay? But patisotta, pati is against, sotta is the stream. So what does it mean? It means what we do is against the stream of human culture. Human culture tends to encourage people to put all of their time and energy into surface or conditional happiness and never talks about the skill set associated with total happiness, which would include, of course, the deeper or unconditional happiness. So even 2,500 years ago, even in the society of India 2,500 years ago, as far as the Buddha was concerned, the society was pushing people in the other direction. So in that sense, we're going against the stream of human culture because the human culture, you know, if you learn how to control, if you learn the skill of controlling some strings on a musical instrument called a guitar, or you learn the skill of controlling an elastic inflated sphere called a basketball, millions and millions of dollars and adulation and celebrity and, you know, celebrity sex, it all becomes available to you as the result of cultivating those skills.

So I'll take it in a second. So how—but, you know, is there—are there—there's sports awards, there's academy awards, but, you know, did you see anybody get the award for the greatest manifestation of equanimity this year? Or the longest strong determination set? That's a subcategory, the longest strong determination set by a non-Asian. You didn't see those awards, so in a sense we're against the stream, yes. Did you say that culture teaches us to go downstream? No, well, I'm actually making a contrast, okay? I'm saying that—Okay, you're saying that culture teaches us to go—struggle to go downstream. Well, we can make different metaphors. Okay.

I'm going to make one just for the fun of it. So the Buddha said we go against the stream, but this song says go with the stream, right? Merrily, merrily, merrily row your boat, gently down the stream. So what's—if we want to make this a Dharma song, then we have to find another stream. The stream of human culture, according to the Buddha, we have to go against that stream.

But is there a stream that we go with, that we go down, when we're on this path? And I would say that is the stream of nature. That—enlightenment is just waiting to happen. It's implied, actually, in the Buddha's formulation. The Buddha said the Eightfold Path is an intervention that removes a necessary condition for non-perfection, implying that the perfection is just waiting to happen.

All you got to do is knock out what's getting in the way. So when I said that, it is possible that the spontaneity aspect that the masters speak about may be that they're tasting entropy. Well, entropy is the force behind all spontaneous— well, maybe not all, but— I'm not a physical chemist, but it's the force behind spontaneous reactions.

When things just happen, they happen because of entropy. For example, do you ever wonder why it is if you stretch a rubber band, all you have to do is let go, and it shrinks? Well, it's because the rubber is made of a lot of different strands. It's a polymer. And when you stretch it, what you do is you impart an order to those strands, which goes—and as soon as you let go, it goes back to the disordered state. That actually creates a force.

The spontaneity, the just-happeningness, when you let go of the rubber band, there is a just-happeningness to its shrinking. That's the taste of entropy. It just happens. It goes right down the stream. It falls into existence. So I think that the stream in this dharma song is the natural— is the force of nature itself that is constantly calling us to enlightenment. Now, you could take a Christian perspective, because they say that God's always calling you, vocation, okay? Whether you can hear the call or not. So I think let's take that to be the stream, and of course, merrily, merrily, means that you— that's the happy that I claimed is the one word that describes everything. Life is but a dream.

That means featherlight and paper thin, which is insight into impermanence and emptiness. But you know, the interesting thing is it encourages you to row your boat in addition to just go down the stream. So when you row the boat, you are exercising control through the oar.

So do you know what the— why should you know? What a stupid question. What's the Greek word for someone who rows or control— who steers the boat? The Greek word. Well, you will recognize it because it's in English, but the person that controls the boat is called the kubernetes. That's what's given us the word cybernetics. It also has given us the word governor, like in the Watt governor. Controllers are called governors, like a thermostat.

Okay, it's a controller, it's a governor, engineering-wise. So the encouragement to row your boat, I would take to mean, yes, and also in addition to flowing down the stream of enlightenment, exercise control with regards to how you carry yourself in the world. So the entire dharma, you're absolutely correct. And like I say, I am sure that this was intentional, part of the school teachers in the 1950s, who mostly were Buddhists. Thank you.



## THE QUICKEST WAY TO ENLIGHTENMENT ~ Shinzen Young

Sometimes people ask me, is there a really quick way to enlightenment? There's got to be a quicker way.

A lot of you know what's coming because this is a standard story that I tell, which is, well, are you sure you want to know? Maybe you won't like what you hear. Yeah, I can tell you some pretty quick ways to transform deeply. Strong determination sitting.

It's a classic. I won't say that every master has done it, but I would say that the great majority of people that come to the master level on this path have done a lot of strong determination sitting. So, what does that mean? That means that you sit down and you say, okay, for the next hour or the next 90 minutes or two hours or three or four or whatever, three days, not going to voluntarily move. So I know the prospect of something like that seems horrific. You might not imagine yourself doing that. Well, first of all, I said it could just be an hour or 90 minutes, okay? It doesn't have to be three days. Secondly, even if it was four hours or eight hours, this is not so extravagantly unrelated to experiences that normal human beings have. In fact, I would suggest to you that at least half of all human beings that ever lived have been through an experience comparable in intensity.

Do you get what I'm talking about? Sitting for eight hours and breaking through a posture is not more intense than giving birth to a baby. If you've done that, okay. Now, of course, it's a different circumstance.

So, I mean, first of all, there's no way out. Secondly, there's a lot to distract and yes, nowadays there are medications and so forth. But the way most people had to give birth to babies for most of humanity's history, I think it was nature's way to bring that person to a permanent transcendence.

Sort of makes sense, right? You're doing the activity of the source, expanding and contracting. It's interesting. I talked about the Sundance yesterday, native people. So the story that's told among the Lakota Sioux is that originally Sundancing was for men only.

Nowadays, it's women, even children, actually. The men wanted to know what it was like to give birth. So if you look at the symbolism of the Sundance, the men wear skirts like women and you're attached by a tether, pierced, which is symbolic of the umbilical cord. And then you have to break loose and that's like being born, et cetera, like a new birth. Actually, in the old days, after their fourth year of Sundancing, they considered that they had died and were a completely new person and they actually gave away all their possessions, like everything.

All their teepees and ponies and everything and they just started from scratch as a new person. Okay, so even though it sort of sounds like really far out there, it's actually no more than what at least half of humans do. But the good news is strong determination sitting, you can gradually work up to.

You train yourself slowly to be able to do this kind of thing. So there's one absolute rule. Do not, do not, do not physically damage the body. So how are you going to know if you're physically damaging the body? Well remember you gradually train yourself to do this, right? It's a slow training. So you sit for an hour, you got some pain, you get up, it goes away, you're okay, you haven't damaged the body. Then you add five minutes, five minutes, five minutes, and as long as you're getting up and after a few minutes you're okay, then you're okay. I can assure you that with rare exceptions, most people can sit down for four hours and not move and get up and they haven't like damaged any joints or anything like that.

But you gradually sort of learn how to do this. Oh by the way, your legs falling asleep isn't going to damage anything. And it's not, you're not cutting off circulation so much, it's more pressure on nerves that causes that paresthesia thing and that, as you notice, disappears as soon as you get up. There might occasionally be exceptions where people have neurological or circulatory issues. So if you wonder about that, check it with a doctor.

Usually it's not that big a deal. The main danger in your legs falling asleep is not massive necrosis that you might be fantasizing, the tissues are dying. The main danger is if you try to get up too quickly, your legs will not hold you and you fall.

I've seen some really far out, you know, people that didn't know that, like in Zen, like the clackers go, you know, and it's like, okay, everybody jumps up and they just like do a somersault across the Zen dome, you know. So yeah, you have to get up slowly. So what's involved in a strong determination sitting? Well, you're going to have four things arise. You're going to have physical sensations and those are going to get more and more and more intense for sure.

And then you're going to have your thoughts and emotions and your will and your desire and your judgments arising moment by moment reactively to that. So that's a pretty big object. That's the whole mind-body-self. That's why if you can have a complete experience of that, it's a powerful transcendence. And that's why, as I say, not everyone that becomes a master, but in Asian style training, an awful lot of people that become masters, they do this.

So what's going to happen? You start to get physical discomfort. Now what I usually do, this is my own personal strategy. You'll find whatever strategy works for you if you decide to do things like this. But my personal strategy is to start by detecting the global spread of the pain rather than going immediately to the local intensity. That's sort of the sensory clarity skill.

After you get really intimate with the body, you realize that the body is like a pond and not always, but quite often when there's a local physical or emotional splash, there's a global ripple. And one of the options within the noting apparatus is what I call zooming. You can zoom in, you can zoom out, you can zoom both ways. So zooming both ways means that you thrust your attention into the local splash, so that's contracted, but at the same time you spread your attention over the whole body.

So you sort of zoom in and out at the same time. Now what that does is that greases the rails, so to speak, for sensations to dissipate in the volume of the body. It's analogous to Boyle's law in physical chemistry.

Pressure is inversely proportional to volume if pressure is analogous to suffering. So here's how that works. So when you zoom into a local intensity, of course that becomes very salient. It intensifies even more. But at the same time you're zooming out.

Now one of two things will happen. Either there will be conscious sensations that are spreading from that local intensity and with the zooming out you'll be able to detect that and open up to it and facilitate that. The other possibility is that actually there aren't conscious spreading sensations.

And that's fine. It's not always the case that there are conscious spreading sensations. But it is almost always the case, with rare exception, that there are subconscious spreading sensations going on. Now an important principle in mindfulness is we only ask you to attend to what is available in conscious experience. So don't worry if you don't detect any of that subliminal spread. But here's the subtlety of the technique, the sort of cleverness of the option. If you spread your awareness over the whole body, zoom out while you zoom in, then even if there's not a conscious awareness of the spread of the sensation, the movement of your attention over the whole body greases the rails for the subconscious processing to spread without impedance. You may not consciously be aware, but you're

giving the very subtle spreading tendencies of the body what they need to dissipate the density of things. So that's one possible strategy for doing it.

So anyway, I tend to sort of try to get the local splash and the global ripple. And then at some point, I start to freak out. So where does the freak out come? Well, the freak out is in the subjective system. I start to go, oh my God, oh my God, no, no, okay. And I start to get disconcerting images of being stabbed and burned and what have you. And then the emotions start to come up in the body. There's a subtle hint of teariness. In here, there's a kind of cold fear thing that sort of pervades the body.

Subtle, but subtle is significant. Those see in, hear in, feel in reactions are natural. If you contract them and unblock them, they won't be a problem. If you can't, then they're going to cross multiply with the physical sensations. And so instead of see in plus hear in plus feel in plus feel out, you're going to get see in times hear in times feel in times feel out. That's why if you've ever noticed, it's like, I can handle it, I can handle it, I can handle it.

And you're like, oh, I can't handle it, okay. It's not linear, right? It's not like it grows like this, it grows like this. That's because things are starting to cross multiply. But if you have enough clarity to separate out the strands so that they don't, they don't tangle and reinforce each other, then actually it just grows linearly. And yes, it gets more and more and more, but you don't get this sort of like snowballing overwhelm thing. It just grows, grows, grows, grows, grows, grows, grows, grows, grows, grows, and then something happens. And then grows, grows, grows, grows, grows, grows, grows, grows. And then it just flows, flows, flows, flows. And then, yeah, you go through another cycle and it's a little more.

And then it flows, flows, flows, flows. The whole mind-body process. It's scary because the ordinary ordering principle is completely unavailable. The ordinary ordering principle for the body is get comfortable. The ordinary ordering principle for the mind is get answers. And you can't do either.

Those are just not available. The mind can't process. In fact, your eyes are sort of rolling in your head and you're right on the verge of passing out. But you've got a smile on your face because you're moment by moment tasting purification. And so you're getting an immediate reward. Once again, this may sound radical, but half the people in this room have done this.

I remember back if you had kids. So it's just a matter of doing it in a really systematic way. So that's a really big object, the whole mind-body self. But if we appreciate it to the extreme, just as it is, then at some point it becomes flowing space. Gradually, gradually, gradually you work your way up to this.

It's not, it's a homework assignment. You've got the rest of your life to turn in. And you don't have to do it if you don't want to. You can just follow the path of bliss, the jhanas, the absorptions, what have you. That works too.

## The Spring of the Void ~ Shinzen Young

So, what prompted me to bring up that koan was this little fellow here, okay, because I can't think of a better iconic representation of enlightenment than this.

Okay, there we go. Yeah, it's fun, isn't it? It is fun. Why is it fun? Why do we like watching this? There is a reason, and it's called Helmholtz free energy, I'm reasonably sure. I would say that we all ride on a kind of effortless just happeningness that is the nature of consciousness. So when I say the word emptiness within, say, the Buddhist context, what image comes to your mind? Well, maybe an image of vastness.

I would say that's not incorrect, but it's exactly half the picture. I think for a lot of people, when they hear Buddhists talk about emptiness, the image that comes to their mind is some sort of bleakness. It's like you bust your buns for 40 years on the cushion and what do you have to show for it? Emptiness. It's like, what? Maybe that's another rabbi and Roshi joke.

The Roshi says we attain emptiness. The rabbi says, that's garnished. Okay, you have to know Yiddish. Garnished means bubkus. It means who wants that? It's nothing.

Okay. However, when I first encountered the word emptiness, I was a student of Buddhism academically. Dongbanye in Tibetan, Shunyata in Sanskrit, Kong in Mandarin Chinese, Ku in Sino-Japanese.

I knew it in many Asian languages. It was just this weird idea that I didn't have any image of. It's like, what the heck? As I say, a lot of people probably think of bleakness, some people think of vastness.

But the reason I so like this little tchotchke that Charlie brought is for many, many years now when I use the word emptiness and when I hear the word emptiness within the Buddhist context, this is exactly what my image is. Bounciness, springiness. In 1660, Robert Boyle wrote a foundational work on pressure. And a year later, he wrote a foundational work on chemistry, which interestingly he called the skeptical chemist.

It was a scathing critique of Aristotelian and Paracelsian alchemy, essentially, and is thought of as the beginning of modern chemistry. But the year before he wrote that, he wrote something that was subtitled, and I just love the title of this, Touching the Spring of the Air. That's how they, back in those days, talked about pressure. It's like the springiness of the air, touching the spring of the air. And that is what the experience of emptiness is for me as a meditative experience. It's directly touching the spring of the void. And so I just mention this as something to know about.

# The UNVEILING of SHINZEN YOUNG's MANDALA (of what he knows)

Cool, huh? Wow. Wow. Applause. Wow. It's pretty, isn't it? Beautiful. Now, like I say, you can't see the symbols from where you are, even if you have good vision, but I'm going to pass out something that you can look at.

But here it is. Here is your senses, right? Your conduct, how life treats you, and the answer to the question, what is mindfulness? Concentration, clarity, equanimity. Why practice mindfulness? Total human happiness. What's involved? How do you practice mindfulness? Techniques? Daily cycle? Yearly cycle? Daily cycle? Have a good time.

What's the history of mindfulness? Shamanic, prehistoric shamanic origins? Historic meditative traditions? Present research? Possibly dawn of a new age. This is the basics. What, why, where, when. Now the details.

Details on what. What is concentration? Well, I've given all the lectures, I'm not going to go into it, but you know, there's what it is, what it isn't. Instances, the deep view, and the taste. And the same information for sensory clarity.

And the same information for equanimity. Details, notice it lines up one to one. Details about this you store here. Details about this, there's the noting board. There's the focus on positive board, iconographically represented. Positive affect is smiling, positive behavior is legs. Positive cognition is a brain.

Ideal or archetype is a holy figure. Positive situation is a dawn. Similar to this, but, and then this is other, and you can do it in the visual auditory somatic. We don't show the do nothing board because it's nothing. And this box tells you the four kinds of information you can extract from these boxes. There's strategies for formal practice. There are ways of classifying, cutting up the pie of sensory experience. There are ways of figuring out applications for certain jobs in the world.

How can I deal with this? How can I deal with that? You can formulate your strategies, that's your tool kit. And also it gives you a detailed view of the history. That's a sundial. You remember that we went through this whole thing and we outlined the whole history of world contemplation based on these categories. So these are the four types of information you can extract from the game boards. So details about this, details about this. What up here? Details about Mr. Happy Head.

Okay. What's surface happiness? Avoiding pain, getting pleasure, avoiding pain. What's deep happiness? Experiencing pleasure times mindfulness. And what's, instead of avoiding pain, you can experience pain divided by mindfulness, reducing suffering. What does the mind want? It wants to shine its light on all these different problems.

But what does it really want? To shine its light on the socket that it's connected to. What you think you want is to avoid don't-know-mind. But what you really want is to be able to experience don't-know-mind as an empowerment. What you think you want, which is valid, is good situations.

Sunny weather, not bad weather. But what you really want, because it leads to these things, is positive behavior. So if you get this for yourself, you're going to be very happy.

You ask me what's the definition of enlightenment. So this is a figure with a smiley face, but the outline is very diffuse. There's no separation between inside and outside.

No thinness to separate. And a consequence of that is that you want to serve. You want to serve materially.

You want to serve by, this is a mouth teaching mindfulness, mouth it, okay? You give dana, you support those that serve materially, and you support those who teach. So this gives you more information about this. Now, let's go deep. This is deep, this is basics. Detail, detail, detail.

This is just for decoration. But it's sort of cool, because this reminds us that our sensory experience is a yin-yang thing. And we see that in detail over here. This reminds us that our path, our techniques, at a deep level arise through an interplay, maybe not exactly yin-yang, but there's a little expansive contractive. So this reminds us of the deep view over here. This is practice, this is the deep view of practice.

The interplay of active versus passive. Work with the parts, work with the whole. Make discriminations, break discriminations. Manifest a self, go into the no self. So this is the sort of the yin-yang, the inner game of practice is here. And the sort of yin-yang of sensory experience, the basic molding forces, the tug of subjective versus objective activation, the surface manifestations of expansion and contraction, the deep manifestations of expansion and contraction, and the effortless activity of time itself, rising and passing simultaneously.

These are the forces, superficial and deep, that mold sensory experience. So this is the doorway to the deep view on this. This is the doorway to the deep view on this.

And this is the doorway to the deep view on the universe, displayed here. The title of the universe is Omega, which is related to the cosmological constant. It's the interplay of expansion and contraction that molds the universe as a whole. And the universe is at the finest scale, the smallest spatial scale, is the Planck. And then this thing with the dot, this circumpunk, represents all the structures that arise in between the universe as a whole and the Planck scale, the cosmic space scale and the Planck spatial scale. There's all these structures that sort of seem to reflect a contractive core and an expansive cloud or something along those lines. And what are they? Galaxies, supermassive black hole. In the center, effusive cloud of stars. Suns, we talked about it, born in between the expansion of thermal photon pressure and the contraction of self-gravity. Planets, core-mantle atmosphere interactions, cause the in and out of the core and mantle, cause the surface continents to flow.

The rising and falling of thermal currents cause the weather to flow. The human being, anatomically, it's got nerves at input, there's process in the brain, motor goes out. The heart and the capillaries, it's an expansive contraction thing. We have a similar kind of structure. And in our complicated, of all creatures, we are the ones that are most aware of the input-output in terms of cause and effect.

And so we live very much in that world also. The cell, I gave a whole talk about how the cell is formed by a lipid bilayer, with polar ends sticking out into the watery environment on the outside and the watery environment on the inside, creating an inside-outside situation. Then macromolecules like proteins with nonpolar core and surrounded by polar radicals.

And so what do those polar radicals do? Well, they can migrate into this membrane and start to create very complex interactions that are input-output of energy and matter and information into the cell. But same sort of deal. Contractive core surrounded by this halo and then atoms, but very much in some ways like galaxies. And at the base of it is the mathematics. The operations of mathematics, which all have the same basic structure, just different flavor. It's an intertwining of three kinds of polarizing and canceling activities. You have step forward, step back, don't move. You have stretch out, pull in, don't move. You

have whirl this way, whirl that way, don't move. All the movements of the dancer are represented by the mathematics and therefore the fact that the mathematics seems to have this polarization, cancellation type of situation shouldn't surprise us because we've discovered it in our own sensory experience. And it seems to be something very fundamental about the way that, so it's sort of at the base of what models all of this. There was a famous biomathematician named Haldane, H-A-L-D-A-N-E, he was an Englishman.

This was back in I guess the Victorian or Edwardian period, maybe not quite that old, but back there, early 19th century, he was active. Someone once asked him, based on his study of mathematics and biology, had he been able to discern any characteristics of the creator? Could he say anything about God's personality based on his development of this field of biomathematics? And he said, yes, as far as I can see, the main characteristic of God is that he has an inordinate fondness for beetles. But actually, I would paraphrase Haldane. I think God has an inordinate fondness for contrast and cancellation. That seems to be the pattern that we see very broadly. And that is everything important that I know. Thank you.

# The Use of "Woo Woo" Words by Enlightened Masters ~Shinzen

## Young

Yeah, you know, the woo-woo words, they can help and they can really get in the way. And sometimes I get a little cynical and think the woo-woo words are used to join students who will keep paying their dues. Well, I suspect that there are, there's a range of motivations among teachers. I'll give you some inside information on teachers, okay. Teachers have a range of motivations.

And yeah, sometimes it's to, you know, make sure the Donna stream is maintained. And, but I used to be extremely cynical and rude about all of this stuff when I started. Because I basically, you know, I just thought it was BS, you know, early, very early on when I was a kid and I was just studying this stuff. It was cool to read about and I liked it and I liked the Asian languages. But I really thought that it was all made up by the monks in order to deceive the faithful.

I mean, I really thought that. And when I went to Asia and I heard great masters speak, I mean, I was privileged. I actually like heard people like Yamada Munon, Shibayama Zenkei, maybe these names don't mean much to you. But these are the gods of mid-20th century Japanese Zen. And they were still alive when I was there, both of them.

And I could speak and understand Japanese. I actually heard these people give talks. And I didn't think they were making it up in order to increase the temple revenue.

But what I did think is they were making it up to blow people's minds. To like say really weird stuff. It's like, you know, it sort of grabs you. So I thought it was like a Zen affectation, like an affected style of presenting things. It's just basically it's like, you know, blow people's minds and get people's attention, whatever. Now I hear myself saying this. I mean, I realize, oh my god, I mean now I know for sure what the motivation in those cases was. I can't say about the kids, the high school kids, you know, at the gate of the temple that are trying to get your shekels, okay.



## There's No Need to Leave Samadhi ~ Shinzen Young

I was talking about when I first learned how to practice. My first teacher was this like samurai actually. He was really macho in the way he talked. He was the president of the sumo club. I mean he wasn't himself built like that but the sumo club are the students at the university that do sumo and he was the advisor.

Usually those kinds of people are sort of quasi militaristic types you know get into the martial arts and things like that. So what he would do is when at the end of each set you know ring the bell to end the set. Just before you ring the bell you'd be sitting there for an hour right. It was Zen you know it was the whole Zen thing.

Although he was a Shingon monk by lineage but he trained in the Zen tradition. Just before he'd hit the bell he'd deliver like some sort of one-line zinger sound bite and then like hit the bell you know. It was like really dramatic and it would and because you're in the really deep state you know it's like it's brainwashing right. You're being indoctrinated because it really hits you right. So I remember but it's good brainwashing. I'm very grateful that I had that.

So I remember once it was like we're all sitting on this. But what it means is the samadhi that you go into and come out of is not samadhi. Meaning so took me years to really understand. I thought I understood what he meant but I didn't really understand what he meant. I thought what he meant is okay stay in these states all the time which is true.

I mean that's part of what he meant. But the deeper understanding is that when you're in a certain state and it's time to start taking care of business whatever business is. Go to the washroom or drive to work or you know make breakfast. You're in this something and now it's time to act. The tendency is to want to in some way go back to the normal way of being and then okay I'm gonna function.

It's like okay well that was that was great but now let's get back to the real world. And the trick is to just not do that. Whatever function needs to arise simply happens from that state. You channel whatever doing needs to be done and if that causes fear or disorientation you equanimize it and you throw caution to the wind and you just function. And that's one of the ways that that Zen bounce is trained. So I would say when that happens if you have to transition to some action, fine just you know you don't leave, you may come out of Samadhi but you don't need to leave Samadhi in order to function. And if you come out, why do you come out? You come out because the inner system reactivates and if you see where that reactivation comes from you actually see the self being born from the non-self. Then you're just fine. There's no difficulties whatsoever in integrating. I don't know if that was what you were asking about. Okay I think we're good for now.

## Touching the Heart ~ Shinzen Young

So, why did we come here? Why do we do this practice? Well, one way to think about it, among many possibilities, is that we came here in order to touch the heart, both metaphorically and literally. So, we know what it means to have one's heart touched metaphorically.

It means to access a place of unconditional love, to love deeply. That's how I would think about the heart that we're trying to touch when we do this practice, when we come to a retreat. So that's sort of on the emotional side. However, this is not the superficial meaning of touching the heart. Not that there's anything wrong with the superficial meaning, but the kind of touching of the heart that I'm thinking of, that would be the purpose for this practice, is to love deeply.

That would be my phrase. And I would say that the ability to love deeply is related to the second touching of the heart, which I said is a literally touching of the heart. So, you might think, oh, literally, then you mean touch the physical heart. No, I mean touch the heart of the matter.

The heart of the matter. And the heart of the matter, from the viewpoint of human experience, is, well, what is human experience? What is the essence of our experience at the deepest level? Whenever I go to Canada, one of the things that I look forward to there is the fact that you can get really good Indian food, specifically South Indian food. If you're familiar with what's called the Udupi cuisine, South Indian vegetarian, can't get it very good in the US, but in Mississauga, near the airport, in the Toronto area, you can get this really, really great Indian cuisine. And the other great cuisine that I can get in Toronto that I don't get in Burlington or Tucson, for that matter, is Hong Kong style dim sum. And whenever I go to the dim sum restaurant, it always has a kind of association for me, because of the two Chinese characters that in Cantonese are pronounced dim sum.

In Mandarin, it's dian xin. So, we like to represent the heart this way. You see it everywhere. And the Chinese character for heart is actually fairly similar looking.

Not a coincidence, obviously. You can even get the aorta a little bit, maybe, and so forth. So, originally, it was definitely a picture of a heart that looked a lot like this. So, what's interesting is the phrase dian xin, or dim sum.

If you're interested, you can look on Wikipedia and you'll see the same history I'm about to tell you. So, dian could mean to warm, sort of warm your heart. So, that's a snack. But also, it can mean to touch or to contact something. If you spot it, you touch it, you have a contact.

And so, for me, I always think of those two sides to the practice. The touching of the heart at the deepest level. This Chinese character sum or shin, it means the physical heart, but it also means consciousness, consciousness itself. In some languages, consciousness is a word separate from the word that means heart. For example, consciousness in Greek is nous, but the word for heart is, you know what, cardiology, right? What is it, cardium, I guess, in Greek.

It's different words. But it turns out that in Chinese, the word that means, and also Japanese, sen kanji, the word that means the physical heart also means consciousness. Sometimes you see it translated as mind, M-I-N-D, but that can be very tricky. Mind can mean mental experience, meaning thought.

But sometimes this character can mean that. But more broadly, particularly within the context of contemplative practice, it means consciousness. In other words, what I would call

sensory experience. So, what is it to directly touch sensory experience? Well, it's to be in the moment, right, with sensory experience. So that is literally to touch the heart of the matter in the sense of, well, every inner or outer heaven or hell that anybody is ever going to experience involves experience.

It involves sensory experience. So, if we know something that is universal to all moments of consciousness, if we know something about consciousness that is universal and deep and deep and helpful, well, then we could say that we have touched the heart of the matter as far as our own personal happiness goes. But there's also the warming of the heart, the contacting of the emotional self in a way that one is drawn to service and touching the emotional self in a way that one is able to deeply love, and based on that, able to effectively act in the world. I would say that there is a very close relationship between these two forms of touching the heart. And spiritual grown-upness, spiritual maturity, well, there's many metrics, many ways that we might measure it, but one way would be the degree to which a person understands the relationship between these two endeavors of touching the heart.

They're very closely related, because when you touch the heart in the sense of contact the nature of consciousness, which is just another way to say contact the nature of see, hear, feel, of sensory experience, that connects you directly to the consciousness of all other beings, not as a concept, not as a wishful thinking belief, but as an inescapable moment-by-moment reality as you move through the world. That fundamental alienation, the fundamental separation of inside and outside, that rock-solid concept that says my identity ends with my skin. Outside the skin is out, everything inside the skin and inside this head is in, and that's me, and there is a kind of a brick wall that separates these two worlds and leads to fundamental alienation. When you touch the deepest part of, or when a person, you, me, anyone, touches directly the senses, you discover that there's a commonality.

All sensory experience at the deepest level has the same taste, *eka rasa*, the one taste, and that one taste is universal. You are directly then connected to everyone else's consciousness, and from that comes quite naturally and easily a sense of loving towards each thing that manifests in front of you, if it's a physical object or it's another person. It could be a saint, it could be a sinner, it could be a beautiful flower or a smelly garbage can, though on the surface of consciousness, though they're all quite different, they're all quite different, but at the instant of perception, what might be called the now in the absolute sense, and remember, any duration is just a bunch of nows, so there actually aren't any durations, there's only the nows. So when you are in the absolute now, you can be aware of surface distinctions, but they're all pervaded by a deep unification, and that unification not only unifies mind and body, not only unifies sense and nonsense, not only unifies pleasure and pain, but also unifies inside and outside, and ultimately unifies the surface with the source, you might say.

True non-dual awareness. So as one goes about ordinary activities during the day, one sees, hears, feels the sight, sound, touch of the world, one sees, hears, and feels the image, talk, body, emotion of the psyche, but they all sort of have, not sort of, they all have the same taste. And that is, and therefore, each of those experiences comes from and returns to the same place, and that place has been given many names confusingly over the years. Confusingly over the years, and across the cultures of the world. Some people call it the true self, some people call it no self, some people call it emptiness, some people call it the source. In the Tan Dynasty in China, they started to call it in the Tan Dynasty in China, they started to call it *Shin Chi*, it means the nature of consciousness, the nature of experience.

It's that same character there. So, as one sees, hears, feels the world, and as one thinks and has emotions about the world, if you are in that moment fully, in the absolute now, then it will seem that all of the surface distinctions arise from and return to, moment by moment, a single unification. And that was also sometimes referred to at that same period as the Buddha nature. There's the very famous story that I've commented on many times.

Does the dog have the Buddha nature? Yes or no? It's a very famous story. You can answer yes, you can answer no, you can answer both yes and no, or you can answer neither yes nor no. I will accept all of those answers as long as you deeply understand what each one of them refers to. OK, so if moment by moment we're touching the primordial perfection, the sound of sound just before you consciously hear sound, the sensation in your body just before you consciously experience that sensation, the primordial stirring that precedes the arising of mental talk, the vibrant matrix from which that arises. When we touch that moment by moment during the day in our ordinary goings and comings, we connect. The fundamental separation between inside and outside goes away. So that the first thing that one sees or hears or feels, the very first thing, the actual sparsha, the actual touch, the actual contact with the now of the senses, that very first taste is a taste of connection. We can call that touching the heart literally, if we use heart in the Chinese sense of the word. The very next thing after that is a spontaneous natural sense of love for what had hitherto earlier in your life been looked upon as the other. That's the next instant.

And then what is the next instant after that? The next instant after that is whatever. Maybe it's a judgment. Maybe it's a plan. Maybe it's nothing in particular.

You just move on to the next thing. It's what would have been there if you hadn't meditated. But because you did meditate and you stayed with it until it took you to the deep end of the pond, now, before all that ordinary stuff that still does occur just like it did before, preceding your judgment or your plan or your association or your ignoring and moving on, because it has been preceded by touching the heart literally and then the warming of the heart, the deep love that comes from inescapable connection, because all the ordinary stuff is always preceded by what I just said, the actions that we take in the world become more effective. So we have that ability to love deeply and act effectively. And it's optimized, it's potentiated, it's empowered by this direct contact. Direct contact is exactly the same as the now, the absolute now.

So some of you know that a common definition of mindfulness, due to Jon Kabat-Zinn, is present-centered, non-judgmental awareness or something like that. But actually, if you wanted to really simplify things, you could leave off the non-judgmental. It's redundant. Do you understand what I'm saying? It's redundant to present-centered. So most people, if you say present-centered or I'm present or something like that, they can only associate it with what they've experienced. So what one is likely to think is, oh, present-centered must mean I'm not thinking about the past, or I'm not lost in my thoughts. That's what it means to be present-centered. Or when I eat, I know I'm eating.

When I walk, I know I'm walking. So that kind of present-centered is a good thing. And in fact, that's pretty much where we start.

I would call that being relatively in the present moment. And as I say, you've got to start somewhere. So that's relatively in the present moment is where you start. Hopefully that will mature to being absolutely in the present moment.

That's a very, very different critter. You could be thinking about anything. You could be thinking about the past or the future, but you're instant by instant so in contact with the image or the talk and so forth that there's no time to fixate time and space. You don't fixate a duration. You don't have the notion I've been thinking for the last three minutes.

To have that notion, you have to have been fixating the overall. If you're just at the razor's edge of the present, well, that razor's edge cuts both ways. So there can't be any extension through time. Likewise, if there's no time, then there's no time for it to spread in space. And so when you're in the absolute now, you're at the source of time and the experience of time and space. But your experience is not embedded in time and space. So that's another way to think about the endeavor. It's when you touch the heart, when you touch consciousness directly, you have an experience that is in a sense outside of the time-space continuum.

Sometimes that's described as abiding in the unborn. That's an interesting way to think about things. Okay, so what I've said so far may sound a little bit abstract. Can I make it more tangible? Sure.

However, I would hasten to mention that just like the metaphor of the blind man and the elephant, there are many, many, many valid alternative descriptions of what it is like to be in the absolute now or touching the heart of the matter. Many valid descriptions. There's one particular one that I like, and it's just one that I like for a variety of reasons.

I'm used to it. I like it because it seems to have some relationship to certain things that come up in math and science and so forth. And that is the paradigm of expansion and contraction. So if I were to put it into words, if I were to try to describe my own experience, I would say that one, in the beginning of practice, has to struggle to just keep track of what's going on. As you get some skill, you're able to keep track of what's going on. And more and more, you become aware that things arise and then they pass. Let's say you have an experience of pain. Your leg didn't hurt, and then it starts to hurt, and then it hurts, and then the bell rings.

That's where you start. But then as you deepen, you'll notice, well, it's not quite just it started and then it lasted and then it stopped. There's like a little bit of waviness on it, a little bit of fluctuation. So the first view is it starts, it lasts for a while, see which side it goes from here, right? It starts, it lasts for a while, then it stops. But then as you pay a little more attention, you'll see it starts, and maybe there's a little bit of fluctuation there.

It's not absolutely the same. And then you start to ask yourself, well, what's the source of that ripple? It's not really very intense. You wouldn't notice it until you start to really pay attention.

Well, the reason there's a subtle ripple on the surface, and ripple doesn't mean it's necessarily regular, but there's some fluctuation. It gets a little stronger, it gets a little weaker. If nothing else, when you get distracted, it diminishes a little bit, and then when you come back to it, it sort of intensifies. But as you start to fathom whence the ripple, you'll see that actually underlying that seeming duration of unchangingness, underlying it is a sequence of arising-passing, arising-passing, arising-passing.

So some of you know what, most of you I guess, are familiar with the concept of a fractal. So now, okay, we have arising-passing, arising-passing, arising-passing. But now, look at an arising. Let's look at a single arising under the microscope. Well, turns out there's a lot of little arisings and passings modulated on that.

And each one of those comes from and returns, comes from and returns, comes from and returns. So, as you're, if you selectively attend to just the arising phase, at some point, all of the arisings become a single continuous spread of space. Because before a surface, see, hear, feel arises, before it arises as an opaque objectified something, deep down there has to be a stirring of pre-conscious processing that sort of creates a space. And if you notice that space beginning to be created, and you just stay with that, you are now in the absolute now. And there is only the spread of the space itself, while at the exact same time, whatever arises on the surface has no time to coagulate, and so all of the passings merge into a single simultaneous effortless collapse of the time-space continuum. So, in the end, the reason something wells up is that it is simultaneously spreading and collapsing. In its beginning is its end. In my beginning is my end. That's a line from T.S.

Eliot. No sooner is it arising, but it's already passing. And if all of the arisings, if you're absolutely in the present moment, all of the arisings become a single spread of space. And all of the passings become a single collapse of space.

And it's like a fountain that's simultaneously gushing and gathering. We might refer to that as absolute activity. An activity that is so continuous that it never turns into a now.

It just stays as a verb. By way of contrast, sometimes there's no arisings or passings. Or, put it, put another way, sometimes something passes and nothing replaces it for a period of time. And by a period of time I mean the clock on the wall is moving, but the clock inside is not moving. So, yes, it's a period of time.

You could say 3 seconds or 3 minutes or 3 hours, whatever it is, something passed and nothing replaced it. Or another way to put it that might sound a little more feasible is the tug of the senses goes away. There's no pull to inner or outer worlds. So if there's no pull to time, there's no pull to space, we might call that absolute rest. So one way to describe the absolute now at a small time-space scale, using now time-space in the relative sense, one way to describe it at a small scale is there's a cycle. There's absolute rest and then that absolute rest breaks apart.

We could call the absolute rest zero because it's not polarized into anything that's affirmative or negative. That's the answer to the koan, does the dog have a buddha nature? If you answer no, that's a correct answer. But you have to understand that that no, N-O, is not the no of yes versus no.

That's the big capital no. Inevitably, that absolute rest, that singularity, that spiritual black hole, in the good sense of black hole, the source, inevitably it breaks apart because it's unstable. It isn't a thing. It's what happens when all the yeses and all the nos, the relative yeses and nos, all the affirmation and negation, needed to mold this or any conceivable universe, when all the binary polarities simultaneously cancel out. So zero is actually just all the positives and negatives. When they come together, they give you zero. In a sense, it's very rich, it contains everything, but it's not a thing. And because of that fundamental instability, it breaks apart. When it breaks apart, half of it only knows to expand, half of it only knows to contract.

They do their thing. If you stay with that, then you are that. You're that alternating cycle of absolute activity, absolute rest. Absolute activity, absolute rest. So life on this planet is a cycle. Relative activity, relative rest. Or no, no, that's not the way to put it.

I take that back. Phrenetic activity during the day and fitful rest during the night is the cycle of this planet for many people. So in a sense, it's a similar cycle, but instead of being driven activity and fitful, phrenetic activity and fitful rest, it's effortless activity and absolute, profound, big stop rest. So don't you experience that cycle. That's one way to describe what it's like when you touch consciousness directly. So then, if that's what the source tastes like, then what does the surface taste like? The surface tastes like whatever, inner and outer, see, hear, feel.

That surface is like so much foam that's born in the cleft between expansion and contraction. Like when you, you know, there's this very expensive property in this part of California. You're on the ocean, it costs a lot of money, right, to have like a house that's, right, overlooking the Pacific.

Why is it that people are willing to pay so much money for that kind of property? Well, one interpretation is so that you can just look out your back window anytime you want, or your front window, depending, and you can see the source by watching the waves. When the wave comes in, you'll see that it's simultaneous expansion and contraction. The surface of the wave is moving towards the land, but there's an undertow that's pulling it out towards the center of the ocean at the same time. And when the wave breaks, you have the, like the famous Hokusai, like the waves at Kanagawa, you know, that famous ukiyo-e print, Japanese woodblock print.

So you have this like Hokusai wave. The crest breaks. The part that is expanding separates from the part that's contracting. And they create a gap with a bunch of foam and a lot of noise. And then at some point, you notice the force that's moving towards the shore stops. The force that's pulling back stops, and there's a cessation. All the foam and all the noise

goes away, and then the cycle starts again.

How is it that D.S. Eliot put it? Not seen because not looked for, but heard, half heard, in the stillness between two waves of the sea. And all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well. Okay, that's absolute rest.

And then the cycle starts again. Polarization, neutralization. And you're aware both of the undercurrent, or both of the ocean of consciousness, but you're also aware of the foam and the noise. But it's just foam and noise.

It's just an epiphenomenon. The foam and the noise are the inner and outer scenery of the senses. So that you cannot contact the world through sight, sound, touch, or contact the world through image, thought, body, emotion. You can't contact the world or contact your own personal identity without first contacting that which links everything together. And that is the first touching of the heart. And then from that, there will be automatically, whether you want it or not, a sense of love, just like the little child.

Like Jesus said, lest ye become as little children, you cannot enter the kingdom. So this is going back to what it was like, if you can remember, in the very early part of life, the first few months of life. Now, it's true sometimes, you know, the neonate is upset and crying and uncomfortable. But not always, okay? And when it's not upset or crying or uncomfortable, where is it? What is it experiencing? In recent years, I've started to remember, I mean, vividly remember, my earliest experiences. And they were absolutely the experience of simultaneous expansion and contraction when I was okay as a little infant.

And at maybe around the age of two or three or four, five, six, I'm not quite sure exactly where, but I can remember that going away and something replacing it. And I actually remember thinking, something's wrong. Something's wrong. What happened? Everything was okay. And now I'm worrying and I'm afraid and I'm always thinking about everything.

And I'm never really happy for no reason now. I can remember losing the kingdom of heaven. That I've actually remembered all my life, but what I didn't remember was specifically what the kingdom of heaven felt like. Of course, because I'd lost it. After many decades of practice, oh, yeah, that's what it was.

Now I remember. And fortunately, I encountered this practice that allows me to go back and sort of do it again, but this time do it right. Or another way to put it is be in the enviable position of having your cake and eating it too. Meaning when everything's fine for the infant, well, they're in this primordial perfection, but they don't know how to negotiate the world, so they're likely to hurt themselves or do something inappropriate. So you go through these life experiences, good news, bad news. Good news, you become adult, you know not to touch fire or run out into the street or what have you.

You know how to negotiate the world as an adult. Bad news, you lost the primordial perfection. Having your cake and eating it too is the best of both worlds.

You're a competent adult that can act effectively in the world. And yet while you're doing that, actually literally while you're doing that, you don't lose contact with this primordial perfection. So if you touch the heart that way, in other words, touch the nature of consciousness, then your heart will be touched because it seems in the emotional sense, because it seems like you're always looking at yourself.

And that's a very emotional experience. If the self that you're looking at is a garbage can, or let's say somewhat more melodramatically, a human being that smells to you like a garbage can because of the way they act, you do experience oneness first, you do experience unconditional love next. But if you need to take an action to correct that person, well, that action is going to be more effective if you've touched the heart in the two ways that I just described before the action. And touching the heart in the two ways that I just described

takes a fraction of a second. In fact, it's always there, whether you notice it or not.

So the effect of that on how one acts in the world, the decisions one makes, the actions, the words that one speaks, the effect of touching the heart in two ways is with time to make us much more effective in the world. That's the phrase I like to use. And that could be described as a balanced practice. So we can speak of what I just described as the deepest, as one way to talk about the taste of consciousness at the deepest level. One way to talk about it. However, we don't have to use the phrase deep. I like that phrase.

It comes natural. However, it is a spatial metaphor of going down. And in fact, that's quite a good metaphor for the process.

We can describe this path as a kind of journey from surface to source. We don't really turn away from the senses. We sort of turn at right angles and auger down into consciousness. So between surface and source, some people encounter unusual phenomena, other people don't. But certainly one way to think about it is, well, we're augering down into the center of consciousness.

It's like a sphere. However, in other traditions, Western traditions, it's thought of as going up because God's in heaven. So we are sort of transcending this low earth existence and we find this spiritual thing that's considered to be above. Now, it's fine if you want to think of it as ascending to Shalom Bim Rumav, the peace of God's own heaven. You could think of it that way.

St. John of the Cross talked about Subida del Monte Carmelo, the ascent of Mount Carmel. So that's a sort of going up. But he did say when he drew the picture of climbing Mount Carmel, he actually drew it like, you know, a picture of it. It's been preserved. And written on this picture is nada, nada, nada, nada, that every place along the journey up is nothing, nothing, nothing.

And then at the very top, he has y en monte nada. And when you finally reach the peak, that's the nothing because it's not a thing. It's either absolute rest outside of time and space or it's absolute activity that is the cleft that we call time and space, within which self and world arise and are reabsorbed, arise and are reabsorbed over and over again. So if you want to think of it as going down, you can. If you want to think of it as going up, you could think of it that way. However, the more scientific and somewhat prosaic way to describe it, and if I wasn't being allowed to talk poetry and be metaphorical, if I was constrained to speak to a group of scientists, which I often am, I wouldn't use this language at all. I would not talk about deep or high. I would talk about just before. I would use temporal language. And that is not metaphor, that's not poetry, that's actually physical science.

Here's what I mean. There's a standard test that is done for newborn children where they test the auditory system of the child. And the way that they do this is through what's called brainstem auditory evoked potential. So brainstem means what it sounds like really deep down in your brain. Evoked potential, well a sound will evoke a voltage change in a processing center in the brain.

And a sight will do the same. Any kind of sensory event creates changes in electrical patterns in the brain. And those are typically monitored through voltage. You don't actually look at the electrical field directly, you don't look at the current. You monitor volts, which is called electrical potential. So when you have a sensory experience, inner or outer, it causes a pattern of electrical, or it's associated with a pattern of electrical activity in the brain. And if you monitor that electrical activity in voltage, then the change in voltage that's caused or associated with the sensory experience, that's called an evoked potential. In other words, it's a potential that happens because of something, some experience you're having. So an auditory evoked potential means a voltage change, in this case associated with external hearing. So they'll expose the infant to a sound, and they have electrodes placed so that as the sound is being processed, first the sound strikes the tympanic membrane, the eardrum,



and then that causes the inner bones to move, and then that causes pressure changes in the organ of Corti, and those then create a first voltage in the spiral ganglion. And then there's a next voltage a little further up, which I think is called the trapezoid body, but I could be wrong, and then there's another voltage, I should have reviewed my neuroanatomy before this talk, in one of the, let's see, it must be the, I think the inferior colliculus, then maybe the next is the, what's it called? Forgetting the name.

It'll come back. And then you have the primary and secondary auditory cortices that are in the temporal lobe. So there's, you know, about at least a half dozen processing stations, and there's only a few milliseconds between, you know, tens of milliseconds, that's a thousandth of a second, right, so literally it takes a fraction of a second to jump from each of those processing stations. Yeah, pretty sure it was the medial geniculate body. Oh, right, right.

Okay, so I told you I'd remember. So each one of those is a processing station, and you can actually track it physically in time. And if the infant has a problem, you can actually tell exactly where the problem is, where neurologically there's a break in the processing. So over a period of maybe a second or two, from the very first striking of the, from the very first evoked potential in the spiral ganglion or the final evoked potential on the secondary acoustic cortex, there's these sequences of processing. And this isn't just true for hear-out, it is presumably true for all sensory experience. So as your detection skills increase with time, you're actually sort of able to hear, maybe you go from the, I don't think it's literally this, but something like, first you only consciously hear on the secondary auditory cortex, and then you start to hear what the primary hears, which you'd never heard before, except it's a little different from sound, but it's obviously sound. And then maybe you're able to hear into the geniculate body, and then you're able to hear into the, what did I call it, the colliculus, and then into the trapezoid body.

And then finally maybe you can actually hear in the ear itself, except by that time it's no longer sound. It's the origin of sound, which is the origin of visual and auditory in you and in all other sentient beings, in everything. At some point you hear back to the unstruck sound, the anahata shabda in Sanskrit. Also, that's from South Asia, from East Asia, exactly the same concept, the sound of one hand. There's no clapping, that's the English version.

The Japanese version and Chinese version is one hand sound. So you hear the unstruck sound, you see the unilluminated sight, you feel the incorporeality of the corpus. And what do you see, hear, feel? This alternating cycle of absolute activity, absolute rest. So you're able to simultaneously tune into what is temporally the earliest that connects you to everything. You touch consciousness, you touch the heart.

But you're also able to tune into all the other stations, including the surface. And on the surface you experience love for no reason other than the all reason. And then you do what you need to do in the world.

As human beings develop the ability to do that, and I do suspect that if we survive, we will, as a species, develop the ability to do that. I think we are the early adapters, or early adopters, I guess that's the phrase. Also early adapters, actually, historically. We're the early adopters.

I suspect if there is a future for us, this is going to be a major feature of the future. So, absolute rest breaks apart into absolute activity, and then returns. On small time-space scales, that's what it's like.

It's cyclic. Absolute rest, absolute activity, and then the relative experiences born in between. However, at large time-space experiential scales, it's always simultaneous expansion and contraction. It's an eternal fountain. How well I know that fountain that gushes and flows, although by night, because of course you're in the formless, it's in the emptiness, it's the activity of emptiness.

So, you could, St. John of the Cross, who said those words in Spanish in the 16th century, this is what he was referring to. So, there's this eternal fountain that for everyone is constantly gushing and gathering, and giving birth to and reabsorbing the inner and outer scenery. And to the extent to which this is a reality for you, to that extent you know, oh, this is what I am at the deepest level. This is what everyone is at the deepest level. This is the heart of the matter. And therefore, to the extent to which that's a reality for a person, to that extent, the horrors of old age, sickness, and death are much less troubling to one. Because this deeper identity is eternal.

It's ironic. The non-thing that is a doing of impermanence, it's permanent. And to the extent to which you have this figure-ground reversal, instead of being the product of this activity, you can, to a certain extent, say, I am that activity itself. The extent to which one can say that, to that extent, one's own frailty, physical frailty, mortality, and so forth, well, you can somewhat sidestep that. You have this place to go to. So, to touch the heart in the sense of liberation, and then to touch the heart in the sense of a call to loving service and effective action, pretty much sums up why we came here.

## TRACKING WHERE EMOTION COMES FROM ~ Shinzen Young

Remind me that I had some other ideas of, well I can actually just tell you.

Just tell me now and then I can always replay it and go, remember you didn't do it. So the other thing is that, okay, one missing piece was, well the two flavors have to simultaneously flow and through each other. Another possible missing piece is that you're getting significant interaction with subliminal thinking. And you might want to look in that direction. And the way you look in that direction, what I was going to have you work with is a special exercise that, with all the years we've done, I'm not sure we've ever done this one, but I'll ask you. Have we ever done noting feel sources? What that means is, I have you note if there's no fear, you say no fear. If there is fear but it's not triggered by anything you're aware of, you say just fear. And then you specify if the fear has been triggered by fear from image, fear from talk, fear from sound, fear from sight, or fear from touch.

No, we haven't done that. Noted fear, I call that noting feel sources. And feel can be generic or specific.

That was the next thing I had in the hopper to try after this. Because what may be happening is that you're getting significant triggering from other senses that are activating the fear in real time. And usually what, you know how I always say, okay, what is science in a nutshell? It's a bunch of what, when, and where, interacting in what ways, and changing at what rates. Typically I emphasize the what, the where, and the rates of change. But some of the special techniques are designed to elucidate the interactions, specifically what's triggering what. And I find that when people are going through significant intractable fear experiences, or emotion in general, but especially fear, literally a few minutes of noting what is triggering that fear in terms of the broad sensory categories. So we can now detect no fear, fear but not triggered by anything, okay, no fear, fear, fear from image, fear from talk, and especially subtle image and subtle talk, the subliminal stuff. The way you know that's happening is you get a tug towards image space or a tug towards talk space, no content awareness at all, but the next instant there's a spike in the fear in the body. Now you know that the subconscious mind... I'm quite aware of having that. Well it turns out if you ask yourself, if you constrain yourself in real time to note, did it come from image, talk, sight, sound, or the physicality of the body, because it's got to be one of those five, that keeping track of the whole system, somehow that vastly reduces the overwhelm.

## Transcendence in Tribal Cultures ~Shinzen Young

Yes, in tribal cultures, this is interesting. Tribal cultures typically do not have a technical vocabulary for these kinds of things.

Typically, they do not have systematic exercises. That's characteristic of literate civilizations. So, when these tribal cultures encounter the elaborate philosophical and technological cultures of the modern world, previously there had been a tendency to sort of think of themselves as being less than, because it's like, wow, all these ideas and the literate cultures foster that notion. And I don't just mean imperialistic Western culture, there's also imperialistic Chinese culture.

I mean, it's a human thing, okay? But actually, it's exactly the opposite. It's actually to the credit of those tribal cultures that they didn't have techniques and didn't have concepts, in a sense. Why? Because they didn't need techniques and they didn't need concepts, they actually experienced the stuff as part of their daily life and as part of their rituals, their ceremonies. So, whereas the literate cultures had words for things but weren't necessarily actually having experiences, the tribal cultures didn't need the words or the techniques.

Life and ceremony sort of did it for people. So, I would say, you know, it's not elaborated like that. Yet, having said that, look what's implied, we'll just take one example of a tribal situation, the one I'm most familiar with, which is Native American, specifically the Lakota or Western Sioux approach to things. If you sort of look at the symbolism of the ceremonies, it's all about complementary polarities. The sacred object, representative sacred object is the pipe. That pipe has a bowl made of earth and a stem made of wood.

And they're kept separate. The bowl stands for Mother Earth, which is a contractive force. The stem stands for Father Sky, which is an expansive force. The tree grows up to the sky.

Eventually, the bowl goes back into the earth, okay, to its source. So, you have these two, you're actually holding in your hands the fundamental forces of the universe. And when you bring them together, okay, then there's an empowering to do things. When you do the sun dance, you dance around a cottonwood tree or aspen, and they're forked like that, okay. So, it's one becoming two, becoming one.

That's what you're looking at for four days. There's different ways that people get pierced. You may have seen in movies like that movie, *The Man Called Horse*. By the way, unlike in that movie, no one screams and cries, okay.

But let's say you get pierced the way it's shown in that movie. So, you get hauled up by these skewers, and you are now completely at the mercy of an expansive force of the sky that's pulling your flesh up, the contractive force of the earth. Those forces are totally beyond what any human mind can deal with. So, you just have to surrender to that, and however long it takes for that which is caught in between the fundamental forces to give, exemplified by about a square inch of skin on either side, you just have to wait. At the moment when it breaks and you fall to the ground is when your prayer is delivered to the source. So, this sort of polarity thing is over the, symbolically it's all there.

It's there in the ceremonies. I've heard one medicine person, when you start a sweat lodge, okay, you put five rocks in the center like that. So, one medicine man said that actually the original Lakota way was there was just four rocks indicating the basic, the directions, okay. And the source, God, Tonka-ashila, was represented by the absence.

But because people couldn't wrap their mind around that, they ended up actually putting something there just to symbolize that. So, I could go on and on, and I'm sorry for getting digressed, but you asked about tribal cultures. I think it's there in the life, it's there in the

symbolism, it's there in the ceremonies. It is not as I've ever been able to see there in terms of organized techniques or philosophical concepts, but as I say, I don't think that that represents a less than situation.

I think it represents a better than situation. They didn't need that stuff. They just lived it, or at least some of them. I'm not saying all our remote ancestors were like that, but is that a sufficient answer about tribal? . .

## Undignified on YouTube, perhaps? ~ Shinzen Young

You did some unusual things in the course of these YouTube interviews, and you did some things that, there's a blooper reel, you haven't, in fact you showed it to me. There are many teachers who might not want to present themselves in certain lights as you have a view wearing the garb of a terrorist or having bodily functions of certain kinds.

Strictly speaking, that was merely the national dress of Palestine. Oh, okay. I'm sorry, you were playing it. Well, I did have a little bit of an intense look, and that was intentional.

Do you regret it? No, not at all. I also point out that I appeared with an Israeli army amiga. Well, that was going to be my next thing, and you looked pretty intense there, too.

I was scary on either side. So, you don't regret doing any of these funny, silly things? Most teachers might not want to appear in a less than... Dignified? Yes, I guess that's the word.

You mean like, have the whole world be able to actually listen to me fart, for example? I said bodily function. I wasn't going to go, yes, he did that. Well, I have no reason so far to regret it. We'll see what happens. Well, now, do you feel, is there an advantage or a disadvantage to showing your, I guess you could say, playful humanity? Well, there's a huge advantage. I think in the end, people want to know that there's a human being behind the sermon, so to speak.

## UNIFIED MINDFULNESS TRAINING NOW AVAILABLE

Hey there, it's Juliana and I am extremely excited today because it is the official launch day of the Foundations program.

We are rolling and I couldn't be more excited about it for a couple of reasons. I know that there is really nothing like this out there right now and I know that for two reasons. One, Xin Zhen's framework, the depth of it, the scope of it, the clarity, the precision, the thoroughness. He has done the work for all of us, both in terms of having a breadth of experience in his own training, being familiar with so many different contemplative approaches, having a scholarly approach, so understanding world contemplative practices on that level, having a scientific rigor because he partners with hard science to do research around practice. So that gives us a tremendous framework to lean on and it makes our job as trainers so much easier. So there's that. But then there's also the fact that, and maybe actually this is connected, there's the fact that in this space right now you either have to take a deep dive into practice, go whole hog and get certified and spend years in training and years in the certification process, which is totally amazing and honorable.

But the flip side of that is there really isn't anything other than that track. So anybody who is in a helping profession and would maybe like to, for example, a psychotherapist offering it as a complimentary practice for their patients, not their main thing, but something they'd like to share because they think it would be useful. So anyone basically who's in a helping profession or in a position to share it who would like to, they're on their own.

You don't really have any kind of framework to lean on. You have to just kind of watch other teachers do it and gather from that how to do it yourself. There isn't anything out there right now that speaks to you if you are either kind of less experienced or you're in a helping profession and you want to offer it just as part of what you do or even if you're more experienced, but you don't necessarily want to take a deep dive into a full-on certification program. So I'm excited because this offers you a framework so that you can get the support you need in offering other people this training. And lastly, it helps you go deeper with your own practice because you bring that level of clarity then in order to be able to tell someone else about it, you really have to know what's going on inside you as you do your practice.

So very powerful on all those levels. Very happy that we've made this available. And today is the opening day.

So check it out. We have some wonderful bonuses that are only available for the next seven days. So those bonuses are designed to support you even more. And you can read about them below. And I'll look forward to connecting with you more on your journey in guiding others and deepening your own practice. And we will connect again soon.

# Upgrade to an Awake Operating System ~ Loch Kelly with

## Stephanie Nash

So I'm Stephanie Nash and I am here talking with Locke Kelly. Hi Locke. Hey, how are you doing Stephanie? Good to see you. We met at the International Dharma Teacher Gathering.

That's right. I remember you swimming in the pond in the lake in the morning. And he did a wonderful workshop there that gave a couple of exercises I really liked and I used for the next year.

I come from Shenzhen and I kind of used some of his things but in another neat, simple, direct way I liked a lot. And we're in LA now. And Locke just did a workshop that I attended yesterday and we thought we would talk about that and stuff. I do want to say the workshop was offered by Compassion LA and it's a group here that offers workshops that work with compassion and awakening wisdom workshops. And their website is [CompassionLA.org](http://CompassionLA.org).

So there's my plug for the people who brought him here and thank you to them for that work. And so I just wanted to talk to you about what it is we were doing yesterday with these exercises. I'm intrigued by your style of directing. You're not telling people to go off and meditate for 10 hours and maybe at some point you can reach nirvana or samadhi or oneness with the universe. You have some really interesting exercises and that work with open-hearted. Open-hearted, what is open-hearted? So open-hearted awareness, so the non-profit institute that I'm part of is Open-Hearted Awareness Institute. And do they have a dot-com or dot-org? We have a website that's under [EffortlessMindfulness.org](http://EffortlessMindfulness.org) or [LockeKelley.org](http://LockeKelley.org). I like effortless mindfulness. I like anything effortless. So the effortless is not that you make no effort, but that you discover that there's an awareness that's already effortlessly aware.

And that I think is kind of the missing piece in the map in Western culture and is often in even Buddhism and other meditation systems. It's put off into kind of an esoteric or, well, you really can't access that immediately. You've got to wait three years, 30 years, three lifetimes. Yes, you say a few lifetimes later. Meanwhile, those who do have an awakening, whether it's intentional or unintentional, report back to us that it's already here and it's already available within us. So that's the premise that I was told. And then as a curious American New Yorker, I said, well, wait a minute then. If it's already here and it's accessible, let's check it out. Let's see if we can, are there groups and approaches and people and teachings that start or do a little more of accessing this, recognizing and realizing this in the midst of daily life rather than going off to a monastery. So that's the premise.

Which is key. Because have you been to a monastery lately? Well, I mean, it's great, but we can't all do that. Yes. And for those who do that, that's another approach. But is there another approach? And what I discovered in kind of traveling around and being interested in this world of meditation, psychology, and eventually the talk I gave at Dharma Teachers was on neuroscience and meditation and awakening. So really bringing kind of contemporary approach of scientific inquiry, which means what's true, what works, what's actually happening. Are people really getting this? Is this an imagination or is this really changing people's lives in a way that they're not only waking up, but they're growing up. That's a kind of maturity, integrity, compassion.

Is this possible? And I think where I am now is that it really is possible in the midst of daily life. It's almost like the next natural stage of human development. Evolution. Yeah. So it's evolution and potential.



It's esoteric only in that means that it's paradoxical, meaning it's not the normal way we learn something by using our minds or informational is not the way you learn this. It's more like feeling how you ride a bicycle. Did you come up with this way of presenting things or did you study with somebody who did it? Because you have some simple exercises that like I don't think I've ever been to a workshop or a presentation where someone just said, okay, we talked for a moment about stuff, but then it's like, okay, let's try this. Okay, feel that? Feel that? And everyone's like, and literally three minutes later, everyone's reporting the adjectives.

I said as a teacher, it's like a high five. It's like everyone's reporting all these adjectives of openness, freedom, peace, various things they got just from trying something right there in that moment. Now, did you develop these techniques? In looking from the beginning for what is the goal? What is the result? What is this thing that people call awakening or what is that about? What does that give you? What does that mean? What changes? What's absent? What's present? I started following that interesting premise to see who it is that was talking about this. And so then I kind of went around from Zen to Vipassana to Tibetan Buddhism, both the Dzogchen and the Maha Mudra, which is really where I ended up.

Many of the practices are based on Maha Mudra, but some are Advaita, some are from Taoism. But there's a... And you can see that thread through them all.

And some are just... and then once you start to have a shift into this, what's called recognition or realization, then it's kind of like awareness shows itself to itself. So there starts to be this curious, almost like a way that, oh, well, wait a minute. First I'm here and I'm contracted and identified, and then I'm open, and then the openness is denied, and then the openness is open-hearted, and then it's related. But now I'm stuck in here, but now I'm stuck, I'm blissed in, I'm spaced out. So how do I get from here to here? And is there an intentional way, or is that efforting kind of a doing that keeps you from letting go? So those kind of curious questions, but I didn't approach it intellectually. I approached it like a palpable, experiential experiment. Like let's find out, let's do it, let's find the way to shift into it and find a way to live from it in the middle of, for me, New York City.

So I'm like, might as well go. That's where I started. You can do it there. That's what I said. If you can walk down the street there, you've got it.

Yeah. You can do it in the subway, and it works just as well. That was the beginning of my practices in New York, yeah. It's a great opportunity.

So you did put this together yourself. One thing that I'm especially intrigued by, because physicality is something that I'm very active with, the kind of embodied person, and I do a lot of movement, and I work with a lot of physical modalities and posture for meditation, and how we communicate with our body and how we can allow our body to move in certain ways that affects how we think and feel. Right. And you, in this development, as you were pulling from all these ingredients and cooking your own stuff, you actually came up with kind of movements. It's a physical way. You have a journey from being in here to the heart, and you just talked about that progression.

Yes, that's right. And then it's really, you ended up having us do an exercise, actually, literally moving from here to here, to the heart, to out. And you had physical movements we did, which I thought, for me personally, I thought there were two levels this learning goes in. In addition, someone can say something, you can hear it, you can conceptualize it, you can even try moving your focus around. But when you add this physicality, for me, once I'm physically moving, it's like a mudra or something, it goes in my body in a different way with just a physical, you're just using hands and arms to kind of help us bring us into it. But I liked that physical commitment to it. And the second was watching it. You'll be up there and I was saying, it's like he's conducting with his body, fluid, very fluid movement.

And now you're doing it. I know, I feel like, I talk a lot with my hands anyway. But, you know, because we hear things and that's one, I was mentioning this, that's one part of the brain, but then we see you do it and visually we get an impression. So there's the physical, the feeling, we hear the words and then we see it. And so I thought it is a way of, your whole approach is about, let's just do this right now there, feel it. And so, and it goes in, in those three different modalities, you see here, feel is something that, you know, I'm trained in those being our three primary sanskrit. So I was very, I was impressed, but I liked, it was fun.

It makes it as opposed to, I am going now, I'm going to, I got to get enlightened by two o'clock. It was really fun. I enjoyed this very much. So, and your personality is also, you can get Woody Allen-y sometimes. Or other, you had other comedy people you were doing in there. But so you want to talk about this physicality of it a little bit? Yeah, I mean, one, you know, like you, I've also been, you know, always been kind of physical and played a lot of sports. So I would say, you know, one little story would be, one way that I discovered this was that I was an ice hockey goalie. Oh, were you? How are your knees? Yeah, they're okay.

Okay. I think the sitting on the cushion was worse for me. My nephew was an ice hockey goalie. So I had discovered the way that I played best was I would shift into another mode of perception. And then I heard on TV, somebody talking, a commentator talking about a quarterback, and they said, he's got eyes in the back of his head. And I was like, you know, 14. So I was like, he's got eyes in the back of the head.

How do you do that? How do you get that? So I literally started developing this way. I thought, okay, well, I can go this far. Let me continue bringing my awareness around this way. And as soon as I brought my awareness around to this 360 degree panoramic awareness, I opened up my panoramic and peripheral vision, and then I dropped down into my body and there became this natural, almost field of awareness where I felt like a cat. And then I would just trust from there that, you know, I'd see somebody take a slap shot, but there'd be all these legs. And all of a sudden, I just trust in my hand would shoot out, and the puck would be in there. And I figured, okay, so rather than being hyper vigilant and one pointed in this effort, the efforting mind, learn how to relax, but not relax, like go to sleep.

But there's another mode of perceiving that's called, you know, that people know, called the zone or being in the flow. So the flow state, this was 14. This was a 14.

14. You did this? Oh, well, see, he took it a long time. Yeah. And, you know, so I felt this and then I was explaining it to a friend who actually lives in LA and is going to come over.

Oh, the web? Yeah. And I was saying like, you know, well, you know, I said, how'd you do that, man? You know, and I started to put it into words. And he was like, Oh, cool. Great.

Happy for you. This is one of your. Okay.

Didn't really want to. I really want that information. I have no idea what you're talking about. I was just asking you like, you know, you know, just say something normal, you know, but so then but then one of the seniors on the team overheard me and the next week he came in and gave me this book, Zen and the Art of Archery. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

He said, here kid, this is what you were talking about. Wow. Yeah. I mean, at that age, he was new to read that.

Yeah. Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance. When I was at Duke in the art class, she never told us how to paint. She just sat there reading Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance. That's what we were like trying to paint. She might come over and go, you know, see that there.

And she'd go back and read it. But that's and then I did Zen and the Art of Archery. Oh, that is so interesting. Yeah.

Well, what was, you know, this panoramic vision and that is key to what you do. But then the dropping down into the body part. Now, what made you at the age of 14 go because you just had to do something. That's why you thought to. I felt that shift that when you open and then are doing something physical, that all of a sudden the feeling is as if you're in every cell of your body. And the center is more like your gut, your dantian or your heart. And you actually are optimally functioning without thinking about thinking.

So all that information is processed in. And then I realized, OK, people talk about it in certain activities like sports or art. But can we do this in everyday life, in relating and creating? Because often you'll see sports stars who get in the zone when they come out of it.

They're actually the opposite. Or you'll see artists or writers who can get in the zone and then all of a sudden their life is a mess because the rest they don't feel the way they feel. And that's so you almost become compulsively addicted to that, which takes you out of it. So I know there are many actors who when they're acting, they feel so alive.

That's right. And they will wait tables and, you know, do things for the rest of life just to get another few minutes of that hit of that high. And what I try to say is a meditation teacher that's available in each moment. But they think, no, I have to be on stage. You know, they get that zone experience.

Two things come to mind. One was the way I understood that samurai were trained was that they're not looking at where their opponent is or where the weapon is. They actually go into a broad focus where they're not even looking at them. They're literally just kind of in you go into an almost feeling of the environment.

And it's this kind of broad focus. And I remember playing with that myself and realizing that there were times in which I was doing that driving can be one. Sometimes in driving, I'm just watching the kind of movement of everything, the flow of the visual field. But what naturally happens is this extension out into space in a way where I'm part of the space.

Yes. You know, I'm just one of the elements moving in it. But this relational experience with everything, it's like we're all one organism and I'm one part of this larger organism. But this getting back and bringing it into the body part. I do find that what's wonderful is that mindfulness is coming into the Western world and it's a revolution in a sense is starting there. And that's my hope for our planet at this time. But often the way in, it is we are minds, you know, it's how we're thinking.

And the embodied aspect of it is sometimes just left out. That's right. Yeah. And that's something that's so important to me. And one of the reasons, one of the reasons I adore what you do, it's just, you know, what you do is really like my style.

I love it. But that you have said every time, you'll say, you talk about that panoramic awareness and then bringing it into the body. And you know, I think of it as including like, you know, kind of the way I just described it. But it's wonderful that you make that in your journey that, no, it's got to happen.

And so could you just talk about that progression a little more? Yeah. So, you know, often when people start with mindfulness, you know, which is wonderful for stress relief and for kind of traditional preliminary practices. And relaxation. And relaxation. That's the aspect of the body people will like.

That's right. But that some of the tools of the initial preliminary practices are actually one pointed focus using the attention of the moving mind. And yet the effortless mindfulness or more advanced practice, you actually have to learn the other set of skills.

You have to learn not only opening your awareness so that you're in the zone and trusting this non-conceptual intelligence that is not checking with thought constantly and is not a quick mind but actually is a mind that is made of more spacious awareness. So the kind of... So the Dzogchen, Mahamudra. Mahamudra or even Zen, Big Sky Mind, you know, this kind of thing. And that the small sense of self which is made of or the ego center which is made of thought referring to thought and creates a little character looking out of your eyes that feels like it's looking out of your eyes and feels like it's an entity.

He does a lot of funny riffs on that. That that, you know, that is one way of functioning. That's one way of operating. But it's the little thought based ego center is just too small to deal with a full emotional life, a full life of intimacy and, you know, and joy in the world.

So we're not just... So I realized that often the first step of stepping out of this ego center and into kind of either a meditative state or even a bigger pure awareness is only partway there but often important. And the usual progression is calm, use focus to calm or calm to focus and then that will calm the chattering mind and then to open up your meditative awareness or discover that there's kind of a bigger, more open mind, open heart which is literally the feeling you get, not an intellectual idea. And then you're kind of... so the way I have people move is actually to feel like awareness can unhook from thought and then open to the space.

And then unhook from thought. He always puts it that way and I like that very much. It's like, it's doing it just on the hook. It's very... It's just like he just says it and everyone goes, oh, okay.

Yeah. And I thought it was so perfect. And I keep going. And one of the strange premises that I realized, I didn't even realize I was doing in the beginning. I thought in the beginning, well, okay, but yeah, the one who's unhooking is not the doer, is not the ego that's unhooking.

But then I just kind of kept going and then I realized, oh, I see what I'm doing. I'm actually asking the awake person the awareness that they already are, that they've already been to unhook awareness from thought and that that awareness or that awake, empty, lucid clarity has a life already and actually has the ability to move and has a kind of intentionality. It isn't just passive. And that often it's been defined as this passive, you know, recognition of awake awareness that you just sit in a meditative state and it's lovely and it's free of suffering. But then one day back to work from a long day retreat and you have the only option you have is operating from ego center.

So this is really about upgrading the operating system. Our little tech dropped. Got to apply it. But literally stepping out of the current little small sense of self, opening to space and then discovering that the awareness actually is discovering an aware mind, what's called nature of mind, big sky mind, pure awareness that is already aware and has already been aware both outside and then. And before you go on, and there's someone could never have. I just want to say this. This isn't just like, hi, I've been on the spiritual path for 12 years now.

Now I'm trying chapter number 17. Someone could walk in and have never done anything and go through this. So it's appealing kind of directly in that way. But one thing I want to say about when you're talking about big sky mind, there's a space. I want to just kind of emphasize the spatiality of it that we're here. No we're not.

You really get the sense that no, you are. So that sense of that extended space of self. I just wanted to, for someone who could just walk in there and go, oh, my awareness is that big.

How can that be? And again, he takes you right there experientially like into second. So but now continue on. Yeah. And just to say what you're saying, because it's the most important point is that this awakes that's both embodied and open hearted is already here. And it's

a consciousness that's already installed in us. It doesn't have to be developed or created.

But we haven't known how to access it. So that's been my whole project. It's like, wait a minute. Why do you have to do this and this and this to get to here? Because once I'm here, let me feel what it's like to lose it. And then let me go back and shift back into it.

Oh, well, I didn't have to do those eight things to get back. Let me see what is the map of consciousness experientially? And then how do you navigate it? And then how do you translate it to somebody and make the language more contemporary and more experiential? So that's kind of what I've been doing is like translating, translating, translating, not just text. But yeah, like what's your New Yorker direct get it is it here? Just get to the point, right? You know, let's go do what's needed and no more.

Yeah. And do it like you learn, you know, you know, you know, take care of your consciousness the way you learn to eat or whether you go to the gym or you do, you know, yoga posture. It's like sometimes I call it the yoga of awareness.

So it's but the interesting thing is, which is what I'm coming back to now is that what it is that's moving and what it is that knows this ground, which is pure awareness, is only awareness. And that's why most people have missed it is because we're trying to effort it. We're using our will. We're using our mind. And we're even using attention of the mind, which which actually can't see it, nor can mindful witnessing see the pure awareness. So even that which pulls back and is able to observe thought can't turn around. It's actually has to be that which is already made of the non local awareness that's locally attached or identified. That can drop that can open from thought and then discover itself as kind of non local awareness and be aware of itself without thought and without senses just from it just doesn't have to do it that long.

It doesn't have to be a long retreat or half hour meditation. It just needs to plug in or surrender or tune in to that which has already been aware. And then as that which is aware, the next important move is the intentionality realizes Oh, form is emptiness. Now emptiness is form.

So the awareness realizes it's aliveness and the feeling of the ocean appearing as waves of consciousness is where you drop back in and you have a it's like you've shifted figure ground of what's awake, what you're aware of, then you can be aware of all your thoughts, feelings, sensations, but you're aware from this huge, loving, supportive inside outside is the same. And you're free of the anxious, perpetually dissatisfied commentator. That's it, we can just stop right now.

That's pretty much it. Yeah, yeah, God, so many things I want to say. And then one more thing is that so then when there's this embodied kind of continuous field of awareness that's primary, you the anxious, the anxiety is gone about anxiousness and the judging, but you still have your full range of emotions.

You're not detached. You're going to start walking into walls or anything. You're actually in a flow state, which is more optimally functioning. And you've dropped not only into your body, but you've dropped from head to heart mind. So it's a feeling that people even if I don't describe it, they say, and I love the term heart mind.

Yeah, it's juicy. What I was going to just say two things real quick. One was when you just described that, and I thought it, but you talked about the kind of loving support of it. And I remember I came up to him after, oh, in an intermission, or maybe it was after the Friday night. Okay, and you did? Yes. And I said when he was describing it, and I thought, you know, I, when I first learned Buddhism, and they're talking about refuge, I thought that's what they were talking about. Because I thought that is the ultimate refuge. Yes, and it is the ultimate refuge that even in Buddhism, you start with Buddha, and then you start with or you start with your guru or your teacher, take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, the

Sangha, and then you start, you know, with and then you realize, oh, the teachers outside, oh, no, the teachers inside. And then some Tibetans do like, oh, there's a deity, but then the deity melts into you. And then you arises that. So ultimately, it is in the systems, ultimately, the refuge is the Tao or the Buddha nature, true nature. It's like a direct path to the ultimate refuge.

## UPIAH - Skillful Means or Outreach ~Shinzen Young

The bell stands for upaya or karuna. So karuna means compassion, but it's bigger than compassion.

It's really outreach. That's why in the Tibetan tradition, karuna and upaya are virtual synonyms. Karuna is compassion. And upaya, I would translate as, it's often translated, what's the standard sort of artificial Buddhist English translation of upaya? Skillful means. You got it.

So what does skillful means refer to? What is the connotation of the word upaya? Well, if I were to give an idiomatic translation, I would probably translate it something like outreach. Remember I said that when you ring the bell, you ring the bell to call people, or you ring the bell to begin or end a set. To me, that's like the coolest job to do because you're reaching out. The bell, it calls sentient beings back to the source, back to the practice.

So I would say upaya is the ways that one reaches out in order to engage people in the practice because just sort of trying to sell people on emptiness or suffering, that might be maybe something the general public doesn't exactly relate to right off the bat. Guess what? I've got good news. You are a soulless robot designed to suffer and too stupid to know that. And the only good part is that you're going to die. But that's not so great because it's almost certain that the next time around you're going to be born as an even stupider soulless robot suffering even more. So this is the Buddhist message.

And you know what? There's damn good reason to say this, okay? And I don't know about the reincarnation piece, but actually, yeah, I agree with the soulless robot designed to suffer, but that's not exactly the whole picture, fortunately. And that is certainly not a way to bring in J. Random human being to the path. Just try to convince him of that. That's like the Iceman cometh, you know, you're trying to sell a person on death. It's like who wants to buy this product? So there are more approachable ways of formulating the same thing.

And that's upaya. So the Buddhist tradition has always thought that it's important to make, to have ways that people can enter the practice. Now how do you do that? Well, it's been done differently in different cultures. One of the ways, let's be honest, that you get people engaged is you impress them with psychic powers and magic. That's something people can relate to in certain cultures at certain times. Most cultures in previous times, and that's where Buddhism existed in those cultures.

So how are you going to convince Kublai Khan to not destroy your temple, but help you build it? Well, you better be able to do magic better than his guys. So that was one of the upayas, and it certainly is legitimate, I suppose, within a certain cultural context. People like to have their fortune told. If you go to a Chinese, I mean, you know, fortune, I mean, we talk about fortune cookies, okay, it's almost like a stereotype, but fortune telling is a really, really old trope in Chinese culture. Although, actually, most people don't know that fortune cookies come from Japan. Originally, most people don't know that.

Look at the Wikipedia. That is where they come from. But anyway, fortunes, telling your fortune, that's the beginning of Chinese literature. That's the I Ching. That's what it is.

It's like how to interpret these hexagrams and so forth. So the culture likes to have their fortune told. So every Chinese temple, if you talk to the average Chinese person, what do you do at the temple? Why do you go to the temple? Well, you throw these pieces of wood or coconut and they fall in a certain way, and then you like draw a fortune and okay, so it goes.

So that's a new pie that brings people into your temple. Food is a big deal in Chinese culture. So Mahayana Buddhism in China is about not eating meat. So you develop an incredible vegetarian cuisine and the temples provide that food. So people go, they get a good vibe, they do a good deed, they didn't eat meat, but they ate something that looked and tasted exactly like meat, but was made out of tofu.

They reproduced all the high cuisine of China in vegetarian food. It's an upaya. It brings someone into the temple. And then, you know, hopefully some connection will be made and from there things will happen. So that's all this kind of stuff is looked upon as upaya. Upaya is sort of a tricky thing, right? I think you can see that there could be a little bit of a slippery slope here.

In terms of, well, honesty. You know, people like miracles. So hey, you know, miraculous things happen.

You know, these, what do they call them, you know, the relics and things that reproduce themselves every day and get more and more and more. It's like, hmm, can't help thinking that someone's manipulating that, okay? But well, it's an upaya. It can be justified. So it's a sort of tricky thing. We want to bring people in.

We want to make things relevant. You're in 12th century Japan. You just came back from China. You learned this cool liberation path called Chan or Zen. And who's running the show in 12th century Japan? Samurai. They're running the show.

So how are you going to get them not to beat you up, but rather to get interested in what you have to say? Well, what's relevant to a samurai? To kill and be killed without fear or conscience is what's relevant to the job of a samurai. You know what? We can provide that. You want that? We can provide that. Now, you can say, whoa, that was a bad thing to do. I mean, the Buddha would like... I mean, it's like in the original rules in the Vinaya, Buddhist monks aren't even allowed to talk about wars and conflicts, what to say to trained warriors. On the other hand, thanks to that, there are now people in Japan who are enlightened Zen masters and taught me.

And maybe if that hadn't happened in the 12th century, that would not have been the case. I remember the first time I ever stayed in a Japanese Zen temple. It was a place called Mount Pukuchi in Kyoto. What I noticed was that these busloads of company workers would come in. It would be like three buses and they're all workers from a certain section of a company like Mitsubishi or Matsushita or one of these big Japanese companies. They'd all be in suits or in their company sort of... What do we call those? Like... Yeah, or the jumpsuits kind of things.

I noticed they'd come into the temple, what's going on? So I asked the Roshi, what is this? And he says, well, they send a section of workers to spend a week living in the Zen temple together, essentially to do a mini session, a sort of mild retreat kind of situation, but mostly just to be in the temple and see what that's like. So I said, why? Why do the companies do this? This is a long, long time ago. This is like 1969 or something. 1968, way back. First time I was in Japan. So why do the companies send their workers? Well, it's a team building exercise is what it is.

This is Japanese team building, seven to a Zen temple, and toughen them up a little bit. Well, you know, it hurts. You have to sit still.

You're tired. And you get a sort of paramilitary team building kind of experience. And that's why the companies do this.

They pay for it because it's to their advantage as a company. So okay, fine. It's sort of cool, actually, in a way that that's their version of team building, sort of classical.



On the other hand, I did ask the guy pointedly, don't you think that they're exploiting you? You know, just they're using you for corporate goals. You're a spiritual teacher, you're a Zen teacher. I mean, you know, in those days, I was pretty rude. I hadn't done much practice. And I was I had a lot of chutzpah. And I used to like to ask impertinent questions from people. But that was okay, because I actually learned a lot from the answers.

Because often the answers were, I was impertinent, but the answers were humble. And that was a learning experience. So he said, well, it's true, to a certain extent.

But if we get 60 people coming in here, maybe one or two of them will take to the practice and will continue with it. And that justifies doing it. So and then he said, this is Hoben.

And Hoben is the Japanese word for upaya. So this is the outreach. So you reach out to people. Zen and the art of. People like to do art in Japan. They like to do flower arranging and tea ceremony. So you sort of make the possibility that they can get a little bit of samadhi as they are doing their art, their flowers or their tea or whatever. And then this makes things relevant to the culture. So what I find interesting is that, of course, history repeats itself.

Now it's coming to the West. How is it making, by it I mean Buddhism, this practice, how is it making a really, I mean like really significant inroad into the culture? How is that happening? It's happening because of the M word and by M I don't mean meditation. What's the M word that I'm thinking of? Mindfulness. Mindfulness. Oh yeah, that one.

This is amazing. Because that word will probably change the course of human history. That word.

Just the way it's come down now. Because mindfulness is an attentional skill set. It can be translated different ways but it's an attentional skill set.

These attentional skills can be used for everything. They can be used for everything. They can be used for pain management. They can be used for improving your tennis game. They can be used for recovery.

They can be used for everything. It's not terribly threatening. The other M word, it's pretty accepted. I mean even the AMA, if you get something, if you have heart or cancer or something, you ask the AMA recommendations, that M word, the meditation word, you'll actually find there. So that's somewhat acceptable, the M word that means meditation. But still, there are sections of society that meditation just sounds weird and an invasion of my personal world. It's like asking someone to pray in a certain way, you're asking them to meditate. But telling people, hey, we're going to give you some exercises that develop attentional skills and then we're going to show you how to apply those attentional skills to what you're interested in, what's important to you. If you've got chronic pain, that's important, okay, etc., etc.

That's something that the average person is not going to catch in their craw. It's not going to seem weird or unnatural. Especially one of the things that I've been considering is to not assume that the first way you train people in mindfulness is to get them to sit down.

Because there's really nothing that says you have to start with a seated practice or that your eyes have to be closed. This is really interesting, because to me, this is the modern upaya. We're reaching out to people. What I decided to do was, okay, if we're flying under the banner of an attentional skill set, well we want them to apply these skills in a way that they're going to dramatically grow. I outlined this in the What is Mindfulness, what this whole strategy is. So the categories of the basic mindfulness system are designed to produce insights right off the bat. So that it's not just that they're going to get a little bit of concentration kind of thing, but they're explicitly developing concentration, sensory clarity, equanimity, and they're learning how to parse their sensory experience in such a way that

the fundamental insights can arise without us trying to get them to believe a certain thing. So we're going to provide you with an attentional skill set, we're going to provide you with a way of analyzing your sensory experience, which is, it's not any doctrine or belief system, it obviously is the case that we see and we hear and we feel. And then people can hopefully start to have really significant experiences. So that to me is a modern and incredible opportunity for upaya.

## WATCHING SUBCONSCIOUS PROCESSING ~ Shinzen Young

But, but, but, there's another possibility. And this one is yet another subtlety, but it is so cool once you get it. Okay, and I'm not sure this is what you're talking about, but it's something that I have to talk about. Okay, so sometimes I'll be working with a first timer, and they're doing focus in, and they elect to do it with inclusive noting. It's just, I give them the option, and it's like, hey, you know, it's going to be sort of complicated. No, it's natural. I want to do it that way. Right? So we're doing see in, hear in, feel in, see hear in, see feel in, hear feel in, all in, gone, or all rest, gone.

And the person reports this. It's not all rest. It's not, but I can't tell you whether, what it is. Okay, I can't say it's see in, hear in, feel in, or what combination, but it's not all rest. It's not that there's no image, no talk, no emotion in the body. It's not all rest, but I can't tell you what's going on. Sounds like a problem, but actually it's not a problem.

It's the beginning of something really cool. What's happening, so what you say is, okay, you're not aware of explicit image, talk, or emotional body, but those spaces are also not in a restful state. What's going on? Well, what do you think is going on? Sub-processing. Subconscious processing. So the whole Western psychological tradition is based on Freud's quote, discovery of the subconscious. Well, guess what? People in India knew about the subconscious two, three thousand years before there was a Freud in Europe. And they knew how to observe the subconscious in real time. Now you can't observe the subconscious visual, auditory, and somatic the way you observe the conscious, because by definition it's subconscious. However you can be aware when a burst of activity arises in subconscious thought and emotion, and you can be aware when that burst of activity passes. How are you aware of that? Well sometimes you're aware because of a shimmering on the screen that tells you that the Rolodex is being flipped through deep down, where there's this sort of undercurrent of talk. It's massively parallel, like listening to a room full of people. You can't make out any strand of a conversation, but you know stuff's going on down there. Same for this sort of like idling in your emotional centers.

Nothing's engaged. You can't say it's anger, fear, sadness, but the emotional centers are sort of on idle. You can actually see it in a baby. You can see the amoeba that is the idling of the limbic circuits in a baby. The baby's not crying. The baby's not smiling, okay, but the baby's sort of... That's their body responding to the sub-threshold activations of the limbic system, okay, that's just expanding and contracting.

Well, it's still there in adults. So one way that you can know, that you can monitor in real time these systems is by noting sort of subtle activity, subtle flow within them. However, this is the part that's really cool and really subtle. You may not even be aware of that undercurrent of something, but you're aware that image space is tugging you. Talk space is tugging you. Emotional feeling space is tugging you, but there's no awareness of any activity, but there's an awareness of a tug of space. That's why it's so important to have a sense of the locations of the spaces. So when you're doing focus in and it's not all rest, you will notice that the non-rest is that you're being tugged towards one, two, or all three of those spaces. That is the cue that there is a very... At that instant, the subconscious mind has started to activate in one, two, or all three of those spaces. And you note that as seeing, hearing, feeling, even though...

Okay, so it's not all rest. There's no explicit activity that you're aware of, not even a vibratory flow, but there is this tug. That's why this triangle, okay? There's a tug here, there's a tug here, there's a tug down here, or all three at once, or what have you. That tug, when your emphasis is on detecting interactivity, that counts as the subtlest level of interactivity. And you just say yes. Even though you don't know what you're saying yes to, you say yes to the tug. And guess what? At some point, that's all that the subjective system needs. It just

needs you to say yes to its amoeboid subliminal flux.

And you go back to that state of the baby. And that's the extent to which the ego needs to be a thing for you, which ain't much of a thing. This was hugely subtle. Don't worry. I'll say it again and again and again.

## WELCOME to this SHINZEN VIDEOS youtube channel!

Hi, I am Stephanie Nash and I started this YouTube channel in 2009, I think, with the initial intention of introducing Shinzen Young and his teachings to a broader audience than might normally stumble upon him.

And my initial idea was to do interviews with him, maybe, where I ask some questions like a beginner might ask. Thus the name of this channel has been Shinzen Interviews for a long time and it may still show up for you as that. We did change the name to Shinzen Videos. I started adding talks and teaching sessions from retreats in addition to the interviews. And I also, with Shinzen's wholehearted approval and encouragement, I have posted bits of interviews I've done with other teachers as a way of sharing the Dharma. So for more information about Shinzen and his teachings, please go to [www.shinzen.org](http://www.shinzen.org) for retreat schedule, blog, his writings, his home practice program, which is a wonderful call-in program.

Anyone from anywhere in the world can talk to him live. Once a month he does that. It's wonderful. The live practice program, they just started that. He works with someone one-on-one and in 45 minutes helps them with something. And it's great training for mindfulness teachers. If you're new to all of this, please let me recommend this free core training at Unified Mindfulness through the link below, where you can get an experiential dip into the world of see, hear, feel, which is Shinzen's main technique at this time.

And I hope you find something here to be helpful for you. And then pass it on. That concludes this intro. Be mindful out there.

## What if the Cause of Suffering Was Physical? ~Shinzen Young

Let's say that there is a necessary cause behind the necessary cause. And the necessary cause that is behind a necessary cause is completely neurophysiological in nature. Then there could be interventions that directly address that neurophysiological.

So you knock out the physiological necessary condition for tanha, therefore you knock out tanha, therefore you knock out what blocks perfection. So, potentially, any piece of research into craving, if it were done very deeply, might unlock a key physiological mechanism. What I find interesting is that you can't get much funding for research on enlightenment, but you can get funding for research on drug addiction. Isn't that funny? But if research on drug addiction were to be done in a way that would be able to go very, very deep and very, very broad, it's possible that the necessary cause for tanha could be found and eliminated.

Which would mean, if we take the Buddhist model, that there would be a physiological, and don't ask me what kind, because I don't know. If I did know, I'd get the Nobel Prize. I have no idea. Is it some super kind of biofeedback? Is it fMRI biofeedback? Is it TMS stimulation? Is it what they call DREADS, which sounds bad, but they're like these...

Sounds like a hair stand. No, it's designer drugs for designer receptors. It's like the cutting edge of the cutting edge of neuroscience. Anyway, who knows what, but if there were a way to knock out the necessary cause for the necessary cause, and it was purely physiological, then nirvana would actually simply happen. Now, what I find the delicious notion is that you can get funding for craving research, and you could get funding for deep and broad craving research, and you could get funding from Republicans, gladly, for deep and broad craving research. Therefore, it could come to pass that Republicans become responsible for the entire world of becoming Buddhist.

# What if you have no concentration? What are the benefits of concentration? ~ Shinzen Young

What if you don't have any concentration? I know it helps build it, but what if you don't even have enough to stay, keep your focus there for five seconds? Well, everybody has to start somewhere. If you think of the analogy to a workout, if you've never worked out, the very first time you work out, you get winded in like two minutes, right? And it's like, oh my God, at this rate, I'll never get anywhere. What you don't realize is that the growth is not linear.

It's somewhat hockey stick, so that you grow faster as you grow more. So it's true initially that you might very well have the experience that you're describing, which is just like, I'll never get this because I, you know, it's like I'm here 1% of the time and 99% of the time I'm like lost in ruminations and worrying about, you know, body sensations, sounds, memory, plan, fantasy. That's my memory, plan, fantasy, reaction, judgment. When I decided I was going to like, okay, I'm going to be healthy, I'm going to run. So I was 21 years old, but I'd never really worked out or done anything. I ran down the block and at the end of the block, I'm like, and it's like, oh my God, I mean, I'll never be able to run more than a block.

But within two months, I was running miles, right? It was a dramatic change. So initially, yes, you may have to put up with that. But everyone has to start somewhere.

Another way to look at it is if you never start, then you'll have to live your entire life in a scattered state, an unrecollected state, as the Christians would say. You know, I quoted T.S. Eliot before. He's got this great phrase where he says, this is a place of disaffection, meaning ordinary experience, right? This is a place of disaffection. Then he goes on and eventually says, distracted from distraction by distraction. People are so distracted, they don't even realize they're distracted. So distracted from distraction by distraction. That's how you're going to have to live your whole life and it's going to be time to die really quick. And then you will not have lived and you'll freak out.

So you've got to start somewhere. So the bad news is, yes, you might have to put up with what you're describing for a while, like getting a stitch when you first try to work out, but things get better with practice. If you don't do something like that, you'll basically just live your life just in that distracted state, meaning you won't really live your life. Meaning you're not focusing on what's relevant back to your concentration model? Exactly.

You can either say, oh my God, this is awful. I'm able to focus 10% of the time and 90% of the time I'm away. So you can make that a problem or you can make that an insight. You can realize, oh, this is how most people live. This is how I would have lived otherwise. So you're never really being present. You're spending the present thinking about the past and the future. Essentially, that's the human condition at least at this point in history. What that means is that people don't fully live each moment and therefore they don't really live. If you discover when you first attempt to meditate that it's nine to one, one unit of focus versus nine units of distraction, that means that you're missing 90% of your life. That's the bad news.

When it comes time to die, you won't have lived and you'll freak out. On the other hand, the good news is with practice, you can get it reversed. Does it take two months like it did for you to run two miles? No, it takes longer typically. Six months to a year of regular practice.

What's regular? I would say 10 minutes each day and at least four hours of intensive continuous practice per month. That's why I have the home practice program so people can

call by phone wherever they are in the world. Oh, I was going to ask you about that later.

Maybe we should finish up this one thought. The bad news is that you may have what might be called a sobering realization when you first try to meditate, which is it's like I say, it's 90% of the time I'm unable to focus. Well, with enough practice, you can eventually reverse that.

You're 90% focused. You've basically multiplied your ability to be present by a factor of nine. That means you get to live life nine times as big as the average human being. When it comes time to die, you will have participated enough in life that you won't freak out. You will have completed your life activity. If I were to tell a person, hey, give me 10 minutes each day, subtract 10 minutes each day from your life and every month subtract four hours and keep that up for the duration and you'll be able to live to be 300 years old.

Well, that would be something like amazing, right? Yeah. That's not possible. You can't add 100 and 200 and however many years to a person's life. However, what you can do is multiply your ability to be present in each moment and you can do that dramatically. As the result of that, you'll get to live life two, three, four times as big as you would otherwise. The effect will be the same richness as though you live to be 100, 200 or 300. That's actually doable by anyone. Formal meditation practice subtracts a little bit of time from your life, but it multiplies the richness and depth of the rest of the time. As we say, do the math. It's a good deal.



## WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT? ~ Shinzen Young

Can you tell me what enlightenment is? So moment by moment, you've probably noticed that you have thoughts, right? Is that correct? And moment by moment, you've probably noticed that you have body sensations. You've also probably noticed that as soon as a thought arises or a body sensation arises, there's a tendency to say, this thought is me, that this sensation is me.

Is that correct? Nothing mysterious so far. The next part, you have to sort of use your imagination. Imagine that you still have thoughts and you still have body sensations, but they no longer immediately trapped your identity. So your identity is free, free to be inside your mind and body like it was before, but also free to move outside of your mind and body, to inhabit briefly anyone's mind and body, to merge with them, or to embrace the entire universe, or to abide at the still point of the turning world beyond time and space, the nothingness that precedes the Big Bang, so to speak, metaphorically speaking. So after enlightenment, people's identity becomes elastic and the mind and body is no longer a place you're locked in. It's a home you comfortably can abide in, but you can leave anytime you want. And that's why we also call it liberation, being set free.

## What is Equanimity? ~ Shinzen Young

So, equanimity sounds like being cooled out and detached, but actually, as we would define it in the mindfulness tradition, it's radical non-interference with the natural flow of sensory experience. So if you have emotions in the body, you don't push them down, but you don't latch onto them inappropriately either. It's a sort of non-pushing and pulling, a hands-off with regards to the flow of your senses, which does not for a moment imply a hands-off with regards to the flow of events in the world.

You can be very proactive and even pushy with regards to circumstances and conditions, but equanimity means that you're not pushing and pulling on the natural operation of your senses. Your senses defined as external sight, external sound, physical type body sensations, your mental images, your internal talk, and your emotional body sensations. You let touch, sight, sound, feel, image, talk, expand and contract as they wish without interference.

Let me just make sure I get that right. So equanimity is my experience, thoughts and feelings and body sensation and how I'm experiencing the world in terms of sight and sound. I'm just letting that happen and watching that kind of flow, I don't know, like waves or something, but that's separate from my wanting to do an action in the world to change things. In other words, as you become passive in a sense with regards to, in the sense that you're passive in the sense that you don't fight yourself. Another way to look at equanimity is it's training your sensory circuits not to interfere with themselves. So you could compare it to if your sensory experience is the engine of a car, equanimity is oiling the engine so the parts don't grind against each other. Being in the Dow or that's that flow that we're going for? It can lead to an experience of fluidity, but sometimes it can lead to an experience of solidity because you're willing to let things melt and freeze. There's another TS, this is going to be TS Eliot time, there's another TS Eliot line, midwinter spring is its own season, between melting and freezing the soul's sap quivers.

You have to be willing to melt and freeze. The equanimity is equanimity with whatever form the senses take, but what equanimity does is it's a skill. So another way to look at it is it's learning to love every sensory experience as it arises but not to hold onto it inappropriately as it passes. How do you develop that skill? I'd like that one.

Everyone would. That's a good skill. Equanimity, let's all have some equanimity.

I concur. And why it's a good skill is you'll discover that when you have equanimity with pain it still hurts but it doesn't bother you. And when you have equanimity with pleasure it not only feels good, it satisfies you. People think they want to be free from pain and to have pleasure, but what they really want is to be free from pain being a problem and to have pleasure that gives satisfaction.

And it turns out that the quality of equanimity does that. So when you say, yeah, I'd like... Yeah, some of that, please. It's like that joke, it's like I'd like to have what she's having. What she's having, yeah, I agree with some of that. That's what I just said. Yeah, that's right. Well, the equanimity is definitely something.

And how do you... Are people desirable? Highly desirable. And in fact, more than desirable may be absolutely essential. If you have some physical and or emotional pain that cannot be gotten rid of by changing circumstances or by analgesia or psychotropics or whatever, then you've got a choice of either developing equanimity or being mired in abject suffering. So definitely equanimity is not only desirable, it may be pivotal to making life worth living under certain circumstances.

## What is Love at the Deepest Level? ~ Shinzen Young

What should we do to make this world a better place? People often ask me, there's this circumstance or that condition in the world. I find myself saying, I can't help people with the specifics.

I don't know the specifics of politics or how things should work in the world, but I do know some general principles that I think hold in all cases. The way I sum it up is the phrase that I used at the end of the last talk, which is, love deeply and act effectively. Acting effectively is related to your mindfulness skills and strategies, but that's not the whole picture of acting effectively.

Acting effectively involves a lot of things, but mindfulness skills and strategies do enter in. Loving deeply critically depends on mindfulness skills and techniques. We always are asking, what is love? We're always seeking something. It's taken me decades to have a confident answer with regards to the question, what is love at a very deep level. I don't think I can confidently answer it at more superficial levels. That would be other kinds of experts would talk about that.

But I do have a confident answer as to what it is at a very deep level, maybe the deepest level. We chant this mantra, Om Mani Padme Hum, hail to the jewel in the lotus. If you think of love as this fragrant, colorful, attractive flower, is there in the center of it something that is its essence that could be called the jewel that's hidden inside that lotus? I would say yes. I would say that I can put it into words. I am also tempted not to put it into words because the words are likely to be a letdown until there's an experience that goes with those words.

The description is sort of not all that poetic. How do we know that there's a world? Well, we see it, we hear it, we touch it, and we think about it. Of course, when we think about it, we see it, we hear comments about it, we have words about it, we have emotional sensations. So through inner and outer activity, we have the perception that there is a world. And through those same sense gates, we have the perception that we have a self.

So as your mindfulness skills develop, it becomes possible to have a more and more complete experience of inner and outer seer field. That means an experience with progressively greater sensory richness, but also progressively less moment-by-moment fixation. That leads to a paradoxical experience, which is an experience of maximal richness, because it's getting richer and richer and richer, but at the same time, minimal somethingness, because the amount of time that you're fixating any particular part of it is getting shorter and shorter and shorter. So at the limit of clarity and equanimity is the experience that is optimally rich and also utterly vacuous at the same time.

And can you put into words what that's like? Sure, but as I say, it's likely to be a bit of a letdown. What it's like is that there is an absolute rest, wherein time and space collapse to a dimensionless point that has no position. And then that breaks apart, and the positive spreads and the negative pulls in. There's a simultaneous expansion and contraction like a space fountain that's spreading and collapsing. It's the fountain of youth.

It's the Ponce de Leon, it's gushing and gathering, and it's shimmering, vibrant space. And if you stay with that, you have everything you ever wanted, and you have absolute safety. You're being held by your cosmic parents.

Your physical parents would have been a representation of this cosmic parenting. But most people don't notice that, even though it happens thousands of times a day. Each time they see the world, or themselves, or hear, or touch, or think, or move, or speak, just before this happens.

So people don't notice it, number one. And number two, that scintillating mist coagulates into inner and outer seer field, and there's a sense of an I that is vulnerable and disconsolate, not getting what it wants. And there's a sense of an it that is fundamentally alien and threatening, called the world or the other. So the jewel in the lotus, when you unfold the petals and look at what's on the inside, when we say we're experiencing human love, be it of the physical kind or any other kind, but it's the human love. Well, the human love is that flower, and certainly that has its place in the nature of things. But it's also important to have a deeper context whereby you understand this non-human love that is hidden within, always was, and is available all the time.

So to love deeply means that before that you are aware that love always comes first. You can't have any reaction of any sort whatsoever without first having a perception of yourself and the world, except at the origin of each perception of self and world is this, this deep love. So if you come in contact with this, that means that all of the decisions, the judgments, the reactions, they're still going to happen like they always do. But there is an inescapable context that proceeds.

So that then colors your responses. It doesn't mean that you no longer judge or that you can't take action or that you can't confront or oppose. It doesn't militate against any of that, but it just puts it in a different context.

So let's say that there's something going on in the world that you think is bad and action needs to be taken to change this, certainly legitimate. If you're able to love deeply, that's going to have a huge effect on acting effectively. Unfortunately, the bad news is most humans have not yet learned how to love deeply. So because loving deeply means hundreds of times in the day, whenever you perceive the other, the enemy, the source of the problem, then, it, whenever you perceive that, you first perceive that being loved into existence by the source, whether you perceive it by sight, sound, touch, or whether you perceive it by thinking about it. I mentioned the Pratyahaparamita literature, Manjushri.

There's the wisdom function and then there's the wisdom writings. So in the temples, at least in the temple where I lived in Japan, at Koyasan, there was a custom of, they celebrate New Year's a little differently than here. So what you do is you stay up all night, like here, on New Year's Eve, but you read the entire 20,000 verses of the Pratyahaparamita, or at least as much of it as you can get through.

You chant it in Sino-Japanese. So I think I mentioned that it's like an encyclopedia Britannica. It's just got all this detail of information about the world of India 2,000 years ago approximately translated into Chinese. So it just lists all this stuff and then it says this is empty, that's empty. It's got all the cultural information, the crazy ideas they had about geography, etc., etc. And then it says this is empty, this is empty, this is empty.

And you might wonder, well, what's the point? But one night on New Year's, when we were doing that, we were chanting all night. You have to look at the book, right, because no one can memorize so much. So you're actually reading it. So you're seeing what the text says. I realized that what this was all about, why we were doing that.

Because, well, let's see. Do you know the, did you ever hear Allen Ginsberg's parody of the Pratyahaparamita? I don't know if it was written down or if he just performed it, but it was something to the effect of shit is empty, piss is empty, fuck is empty, screw is empty. Something along those lines.

Yeah, really, you'll probably find it on the internet. So I just said a bunch of four-letter words, but when you, if I say, you know, houses are empty, apartments are empty, parks are empty, if you're really watching image space, you'll see that you get what in Sanskrit is called spota, S-P-O-T-A, S-P-H-O-T-A, spota. What a spota is, is a little flicker of an image that's very, very fleeting. So when you're reading, you know, this is empty, this is empty, every one of those thises, I started to notice created a momentary mental image. How else

would I know what it means, right? And then I started to tune into that and I could see the images, each one of those images born in between expansion and contraction, coming from and returning to empty. It's a whole meditation. You're thinking about the world, how do you think about the world? Do you actually, are you actually aware that each one of those bursts of image and talk come from and return to the source? So once you sort of realize that, you'll be able to understand the early 21st century North American Sutra, which goes like this, Trump is empty, Obama is empty, Trump is empty, Obama is empty, as many times as you need to hear that.

## WHAT IS THE SELF? ~ Shinzen Young

Can you explain to me what is the self? So you have thoughts, correct? Yes. And have you noticed that those thoughts tend to occur constantly? Always.

Right? A lot of thoughts. You also have body sensations. Now have you ever noticed that some of those thoughts are visual, like you have memory, plan, fantasy, scenes? Yes.

But some of them are auditory also, right? You hear dialogues, monologues. And your body, some of the sensations are purely physical. But when you have strong emotions, pleasant or unpleasant, you also experience them as changes in your body sensation, right? So you have mental experience that consists of visual and auditory thoughts, and it's continuous. And you have body sensations, some of which are physical, some of which are emotional. And they're pretty continuous too, right? So you're constantly pulled to mental states and body states. And nothing mysterious so far.

No, no. Anyone can see that. You've probably also noticed that when a thought arises, you tend to say, this is me. This thought is me.

Right, right. And how about your body experience? We even said your, right? These sensations, they're me, right? Especially if they're emotional. A broken leg is me, but a broken heart is, in some ways, even more me, an emotional sensation. So you've noticed how moment by moment, there's a lot of thoughts, but we can analyze them sensorially into something visual and something auditory. And you've noticed how moment by moment, you have physical sensations for sure, and sometimes emotional.

It's incessant. And you've also noticed that as soon as a body state or a mind state arises, you tend to say, this is me. These are my thoughts.

This is my body. So to sum it up, you're going to get different answers depending on who you ask. And those answers are all legitimate. They're different perspectives on the word self. But for me, the simplest way to think about self is, self is a moment by moment experience. And that experience consists of mind and body. And mind is mental image and mental talk. Body is physicality and emotionality. So your mental images, your mental talk, your physical and emotional experience is what you identify with moment by moment. And that is the ordinary experience of self.

## What technique does Shinzen use?

Out of curiosity, what strategy do you generally employ using your technique? You mean as I'm laughing around in the world? No, not on the cushion.

Oh, on the cushion? Yeah. Mostly both God. Simultaneous expansion, contraction, and their vanishing. So flow and... Well, both. Both is the label for an awareness that there is simultaneous expansion and contraction. That's part of the...

So the quick answer is in terms of what's on the grid is expansion, contraction, flow. That's what I typically am aware of. Okay. And then last thing was when I was reading in the manual about that for us, it was... because I love flow and so forth, but I also saw that it was like don't forget to stay in, you know, see here and feel rest, focus out. And focus out and focus in just because there's subtle levels that you don't want to... you know, that you're still needing to process.

I understand. So it's okay to have sort of a main practice. But if you're familiar with the whole grid, I encourage people at least occasionally to touch base with other things just to get some balance. But that's just a light suggestion. If you're not familiar with the whole grid, obviously you can't do that. But let's say you're familiar with the whole thing.

I think it's... a lot of people have a single thing that they do that's their main practice. And if you are familiar with this other stuff, I think it's useful to touch base at least occasionally with it for rounding purposes.

But if you're not familiar with the whole grid, then you just can have just one practice. But remember that one of the ways you push the envelope is by... if there's a particular approach that you like, you see, well, can you maintain it in motion and then in daily life, etc. So maybe you could get a lot of flow when you're sitting, but can you actually get it while you're talking to people and driving the car? That's a way of pushing the envelope with the practice.

# When Sensory Experience Loses Its "Something-ness" ~ Shinzen

## Young

In early Buddhism, there's a big emphasis on the notion of what's called Udayabhaya in practice. So, aya means to go, ut is up, and vi is away. So, udaya is arising, something udaya, rises up, and then vyaya is passing. So, you've probably heard of arising and passing as a stage that people go through in their practice where the perception is dominated by a sense of coming and going. So, when you begin your practice, you're just all over the map.

Remember that? Sometimes it's still like that for me too. You're just all over the map. We'll talk a little bit more about all over the map a little later. But you're all over the map and you can't concentrate and you long for the ability to concentrate and some sort of tranquility and ease. And then you actually start to experience more tranquility and ease and your focus improves. And then things get sort of interesting because now you have like a little secret thing that you can do anytime you want.

You can taste samadhi, samadhi rasa, the taste of being in a concentrated state becomes available to you not only during formal practice, but also as you're sort of bopping around in the world. So, that's really nice. And I can remember when that started to come on for me. And it's like, wow, I got this secret thing that I can do now anytime in the day.

So, it's like I'll never waste any time again. Either what I'm doing is intrinsically meaningful for me or I'm forced to do something that's meaningless like wait in line or be uncomfortable like I'm sick or something. And those times that would have been like really crappy at best but now may be uncomfortable.

Now these are my secret times because I can use them to cultivate and deepen this taste of concentration. So, that's a nice stage and really starts to change the way that you think about things. Like Don Juan in the Carlos Castaneda book said, most people think of the day in terms of fortune and misfortune, but a person who is on a path to being able to see, S-E-E, thinks of the day in terms of a sequence of challenges. So, I can remember this really nice stage when the day became just a sequence of okay, can I do this and still taste a little bit of concentration? Can I do this more complex, complicated thing and still taste a little bit of concentration? So, that's nice.

Then you're able to use that concentration if you're doing a sort of deconstructive, classic mindfulness approach to things. You're able to untangle the strands of self. Now in early Buddhism, the self is analysed into components in a number of different ways, but the five aggregates, you can look it up on Wikipedia if you want, the five skandhas, are sort of the classic deconstruction of the somethingness of selfhood. The idea is, okay, if you can untangle and unblock these, then you will see that there is no thing inside you called a self.

So, in my case, I have applied Occam's razor, which says, well, do things as simply as you can. What I've found is that you just need three elements to get a core sense of I am-ness, mental image, mental talk, and body emotion as a system. Sure enough, if you are able to untangle those, you start to get some liberation from the sense of self as a separate, suffering, limited entity.

So, that's nice. You bring sensory clarity now to the picture and you're sort of untangling. That's quite liberating, but then at an even deeper level, things simplify further. You get a sense that everything is just arising and passing, arising and passing. That's true for your inner sense of self, but it's also true even for the sight, sounds, and physical touches that would constitute the perception of an external world. In fact, the distinction between inside



and outside breaks down when you're in a situation of arising and passing.

So, everything gets really, really simplified. There's just this constant rhythm of things rising up, things passing away, rising up, passing away. As that is happening, you get a sense that each of these arising and passing moments is accompanied by a taste of purification.

This is really hard to put into words. So, as it's arising, it's sort of like vibrating and arising. You get the sense that the somethingness of that experience is sort of dissipating.

In fact, sometimes I get... Now, this is just a mental image, right? It's just what I'm about to describe is just a representation that happens in my image space. You might not have this same representation, but just to share, I get this sense that each inner or outer, see, hear, feel, big or small, whatever it is, it's sort of like this bubble that rises up and then passes away, arising, passing.

It's vibrating as it's arising, and it's vibrating as it's passing. I get in image space this image of like this black smoke is coming out of it and sort of like dissipating in all directions. That black smoke is the somethingness of that sensory event.

The somethingness of it is being released and freeing up the pure doingness of it. It actually is becoming transparent, like you can see through it. The color of the modalities, visual, auditory, somatic, or the color of pleasant versus unpleasant, or mind versus body, any sort of quality that would, quote, color that experience is like being dissipated as this sort of... The black smoke would sort of represent the opacity or the thingness of that experience, and it's like dissipating. Now, once again, this is just an image, a representation in my image space of a taste of something. What it's the taste of is that sensory experience is becoming transparent.

It's losing its somethingness. Actually, there's what they call the three vimokshas. This is a technical term. You can look it up. It's sort of interesting. It's not a commonly used set of categories in Buddhism, but it is traditional. They're called vimoksha dvāra, the three gates of liberation that you go through to get free from the somethingness of self and world, the coagulation of self and world into a suffering thing. There are these three vimoksha dvāras, or gates of liberation. That's why temples in Japan, Buddhist temples, they're called vimokshas.

The first thing you encounter when you approach is like a three gate situation, and it's supposed to remind you of these three gates of liberation. Anyway, one of the gates of liberation is emptiness, shunyata. Another one is animitta, which means without somethingness or without, no, a better translation, without essence, essenceless. Now, essenceless sounds sort of bad, but it means without any limiting quality.

Then the last one is very interesting, apranidhana, which means effortlessness. Everything in the world is vacuous, essenceless, and just occurs spontaneously. Now, I know those words don't sound very appealing, but actually it's just bliss city when you start to have these experiences. So I can actually sort of get the sense that the essence or the thingness is dissipating, and the experience is almost like it's becoming transparent.

Self and world are becoming transparent. And sure enough, also there is a kind of delicious spontaneity or effortless, will-less, just happeningness in the arisings and passings. So that's the three gates of liberation that you pass through the vimoksha dvāra to realize nirvana. So all of this that I'm describing is a consequence of clarity and equanimity. So everything simplifies to this theme of arising and passing, arising and passing. And even if you're going through something excruciating in the body, even if you're going through something confusing in the mind, the flavor of excruciation or the flavor of confusion are sort of like being dissipated and they're being replaced by this one flavor, this ekarasa, which is the taste of freedom. So this is sort of the classic description of A&P;,, some Western teachers call it A&P;,, like my friend Kenneth Folk, arising and passing. It's an important stage. Now

the way I like to approach things is that if you do enough practice, this experience that I'm describing becomes available anytime you want. It's not like something that's rare, happens occasionally, or it's like a special thing that happens on a retreat.

You want to move in the direction that any time during the day you can just go into what I just described. And for some people that comes on more quickly in their practice, for some people it takes a little bit longer. But we're in this for the long haul.

You know, my stock phrase, I'm not going to promise you something that is necessarily a quick fix, but I do promise you a deep fix. But we're engaged in a householder's practice here, we're not locked in a cave in Tibet or in the forest of Southeast Asia or doing like samurai bootcamp training in Japan in a Zen temple. We're bopping around living North American lives. And so we sort of have to amortize our ego death over long periods of time. You could think of it as a kinder, gentler form of ego death, as opposed to say Zen, where, oh my God, some of you know, basically they just pull the rug out from under you.

It's impossible to get comfortable and it's simply impossible. The day is just a sequence of physical, mental, and conceptual assaults on your being. Kurushimi no renzoku is one way I've heard it described, an endless sequence of miseries. Some of you speak Japanese.

Kurushimi no renzoku. At the beginning, that's what it is. So what are you going to do? Well, you either leave or you're driven into the only place of relief, which is this arising, passing thing.

And yes, that can happen fairly quickly under those severe monastic training situations. But we're not in that. We've made a different choice.

We want the kinder, gentler version. So, okay, fine. I'm not saying that what I just described to you will necessarily happen in the first year, even the first five years of your practice, but time will happen. Time will pass. And you might be saying, yeah, but I'm old, so I don't have a lot of time. Well, you know what I'm going to say with respect to that? The aging process can be an ally to liberation.

It's sort of a natural pointing towards no self. So one way or another, we've got time.

# When the "Passive Night" Grabs You ~ Shinzen Young with

Stephanie Nash

There's a way of resting in the source that, like I say, yeah, it's going to take a lot of work, but I see how that softens into a big smile based on what's happening during the sits now.

You know, when I'm sitting here and I'm seeing my physiology like really, really slowing down and say, oh, OK, this is getting close to a petit mort, little death. Something like that. OK, thank you. Thank you. Hard to put into words.

It's like that line from Casablanca, you know, Louis, just like any other man, only more so. All right. We have just enough time, Stephanie. You want more details on your own and as Lama? No, I don't. But thank you. Although what I'm asking may relate to what you just said. This is a question. It's a report of an experience and a hypothesis I have about it.

But I'd like your feedback. It's about processing emotions and possibly different flavors of equanimity. Not sure the practice I've been doing a lot on this retreat. I've been doing a lot of practices, but one is turning back, coming from the perspective of awareness. And I find myself saying this phrase like, oh, seeing is happening.

Hearing is happening. You know, and I'm not saying the phrase to get it. That just kind of comes out when I kind of shift there. And then I've noticed a change of strategy for emotions. Then normally when emotions happen, my MO is to turn towards them and surrender and let it all flow. And if it's really intense, I do expansion, contraction, because it's like a slingshot to sensation.

You know, and I think of that like, well, I'll save that. But now what happens when I'm coming from the place of awareness into the emotion, as opposed to me participating and opening and allowing and having this clarity, it's almost like I'm coming from this place of a calmness, a stillness, a kind of silent vastness. And it's like, I'm just waiting for this thought or feeling to reveal its emptiness. Or I was doing that, and then I thought, oh, let me just watch expansion and contraction in it and let it dissolve.

And I think those might be the same thing. And the word that keeps coming out of my head when I'm doing this is, oh, it's not real. Oh, it's not real. It's all empty.

It's all empty. And so I was wondering, as I'm doing this and feeling the stickiness be less sticky, is this, is that a different flavor of equanimity? Am I dissolving the craving at a deeper level? I do believe both involve a kind of radical equanimity, but the first one feels like it has more of my participation in it. And the second one is almost identifying there's not a problem in the first place. So I just wanted to know if you could talk about that a little bit. Actually this is going to be one of those questions that has a pretty short and I hope actually a spot on answer. Maybe I can do it in one. One finger's in.

All right. Yes, Choshin's trying to pass her koan. Okay, so the general vibe I get from your report, the overall report, what pops into my head is figure ground reversal that you hear me talk about. That at some point you go from God is a fantasy inside a material world to the material world is a fantasy inside God.

That's a figure ground reversal. And it sounds to me like you're being taken down that path, which is very good. It's taking... Well, it's taking you. You're moving into what the Catholics used to call the passive night as opposed to the active night, the dark two sides.

This is the passive night. It's taking you more and more. And the deeper it takes you, the more effortlessly animated you become when it gives back space time for your existence. So that's what I heard. You're moving towards that shift, and that's an important shift.

That's the authentic person without a fixated center, right? Yeah. Okay. Thank you for that clear but short answer.

Well, thank all of you for the wonderful work and the wonderful interactions. It's a mihaya, as we say in the language of my people. That means a joy that gives you chai, it gives you life. So I think we're good. And see you, I guess, in the Zendo next.

## WHERE DOES LOVE COME IN? ~ Shinzen Young

So, tonight's our last night, and there were several requests to talk about the iconic representation of human happiness, so I'm going to do that. First, though, I want to respond to a question, actually Aisha gave a really good question, and so I just want to briefly respond to that, which is, on this path, where does the love come from? I think that was the takeaway piece, right? Where does it fit in? Yeah, where does it fit in? So, I would say that the actual word that's used in a lot of the Buddhist world is, this would be the, God, I'm forgetting how to write Chinese. Is it, or lose it? Good enough? Alright.

Yeah, yeah, this guy's familiar too. Pretty sure it doesn't have that stuff, right? Tsebe in Mandarin Chinese, jihi in Japanese. This one means love, it's maitri in Sanskrit, metta and pali, this corresponds to the love, and garuna, compassion. And these are sort of linked concepts, so when you say where does the love come from, within a sort of Buddhist way of thinking of things, it's where does the maitri, garuna, come from, or how does it fit in? So that got me thinking, and it seems to me that within the framework that I present to you, the procedures and the categories, it comes from four sources. One is, it's just natural. Human beings are born with a natural sense of love. In fact, because I'm getting sort of Chinese tonight, but there's a word in Chinese that means, according to Confucius, it carries this sense of the natural love that everyone's born with.

It's pronounced ran, and it's the character for person and the character for two. So it's like the natural thing for people is to love each other. That's the way we're born, according to Confucius. So then what happens? Well, what happens is that we accumulate a lot of poison and pain, and our primordial sort of instinct to love gets covered over by many physical, emotional, mental, uncomfortable experiences in the process from infancy on the process of socialization, the process of discovering that the physical world can hurt you.

That natural, spontaneous love gets covered over. So as we work through that stored poison and pain, as it percolates up in our practice, and we essentially don't do anything about it, we just open up to it and let it dissipate, don't reinforce it. So that stored poison and pain gets worked through.

And to the extent that the suffering, the seeds of suffering are being extirpated from us, to that extent that primordial love just gets uncovered again. It's always been there. So that's one source of it. Another source, actually related but a little different side to it, is, remember it's compassion and love. So that the struggles that we go through when we do this path, particularly in the beginning, and gotta be honest, the beginning's about the first 20 years. Particularly in the beginning. Particularly in the beginning of the beginning, which is maybe the first five years. We are very, very, typically we humans who take on this path are very uncomfortable while we're doing the practice. I mean, we do everything we can to show you how to have fun and so forth, but there's the achiness of the body, there's the scatteredness in the mind, there's all sorts of emotions, confusions, sleepiness.

And within the context of North American vipassana practice, of course you can take a break any time you want, but within the Asian sort of traditional training and whatever, if you're in a monastery, there are no breaks. It's merciless. And it can be pretty damn hellacious during those initial years of training. So you might say, well, gee, that's sort of like really bad, but the effect of that is to impart within a person an unforgettable lesson in the nature of human misery. I know you wonder, like, why do I have to face all this shit when I sit here? My personal shit. Well, part of it is that later on down the line, when to a certain extent that's gotten worked through, you will never forget how miserable you were and you'll realize that most human beings live in that kind of misery. And you will have a sense of compassion for them because of what you had to go through.

So that's one of the uses. You don't realize it at the time. At the time, it's just like, you know, why does this have to be so hard? Why am I so miserable? Et cetera, et cetera.

But then you look back and you realize, oh, I was learning a lesson that's going to stay with me for my entire life. I really know what it means to be miserable. I can tell you in the monastery in Japan, I definitely knew what it meant to be miserable 24-7. And it was relative to Japanese standards, by no means the most rigorous kind of environment.

Now, the most rigorous training environment in Japan is myoshinji, zen temple. It's called oni-sodo. Oni-zendo. Sodo and zendo, they mean the same thing. Oni-zendo. Oni in Japanese means demon.

Demon meditation hall. The expression is for the first three years, the novice never shows the white of their teeth, meaning they never smile once in the first three years of the training. It's just abject misery. Kurushimi no renzoku in Japanese, it means like an unending sequence of miseries.

But as the result of that, it produces people like Sasaki Roshi, my teacher Sasaki Roshi. That's where he trained. 10 years at least, I'm thinking, at myoshinji. And now 104, the activity of compassion does not stop. There's no retiring, there's no vacations.

It's all, it's like all service all the time to anyone who wants to do the practice. Where does that kind of vitality come from? Where does that endless patience come from? From those horrific early years where, you know, he will never forget the misery of the average human being, however transcendent he becomes, and he'll care. So there's a, it's compassion and it's love. So one thing is, well, as you work through your poison and pain, the natural love is just there.

Another is that in the process of working through your own poison and pain, you have to face your poison and pain. And that gives you this sense of compassion for the human condition. That's the gold standard of spirituality is love of the human condition. It's beyond love of humanity.

I mean, you can love humanity, but you have to love the human condition, which is really screwed up. So that's another source. Then there's merging. There's I-thou, there's the experience of other as yourself. And that comes in two flavors, relative and absolute. Most of you are familiar with the focus out technique, where you anchor yourself in the physical senses, sights, and so forth. That causes a relative merging of inside and outside. So you experience other as yourself, quite literally, not as a concept, but as an actual sensory event, because it's all about expansion and contraction. And so if the touch, sight, sound of another expands, and you allow the image talk and emotional body of your subject of world to contract, then you experience other as self. And if you have many, many, many experiences like that, well, that leads to an I-thou relationship with other, as opposed to an I-it, or we're still an us versus them relationship. So that merging that comes about by focusing out, that's a relative oneness.

And so that with which you are one, you naturally feel some love for. Then there's the absolute merging, which is to share zero. Not only does the subject disappear, the object disappears, and you and the other abide in the source. The dimensionless point before the big bang of each moment of self and world, each mind moment, is a sort of little version of the big bang, a little big bang, like little big man or something. So we have these little big bangs. And before each little big bang, quote before, there is the one, the singular, the singularity, the zero. And so having those absolute merging experiences with people, you come to the sense that we all sort of have our feet placed, whether we know it or not, we all have our feet placed on the same groundless ground. And so that gives you another reason for viewing others as brother and sister. You share the womb, the formless womb. That's what brother and sister in Greek, adelphos, it means a delphos. A means share and delphos is womb. So that which you share the womb, the formless womb, the same source, naturally

there's a sense of love and concern. So those are, I can think of within the theoretical and practice framework that I give you, that that would be four places where that love comes from, comes in.

## WHY DO I DO IT? (solo-retreats in nature) ~ Stephanie Nash

Why do I do this? Why do I go off and camp when it's this has been really cold and spend 14 days alone not talking to anybody just me and the ocean and the wind and the trees and my tent.

Why do I do it? There is no better restoration for me. There's something about it that's just so pure and my nervous system just unravels, unwinds, lets go and insights come. I was gonna be hard leaving. I can't believe it's been 11 days. It feels like it's been three. Time flies when you're not here. I disappear. I disappear and I disappear and become the wind and the trees and the waves and the clouds. It's not a bad way to go. you. .



## WHY MEDITATE? ~ Shinzen Young

Meditation optimizes five fundamental dimensions of human happiness. The first dimension is reducing suffering, the ability to experience unavoidable pain with less problem.

The second is elevation of fulfillment, the ability to experience even small pleasures with enormous satisfaction. The third dimension where meditation impacts is self-understanding. It's actually helpful to understand yourself at a psychological level, but where meditation really shines is to understand who you are at the deepest level. The fourth dimension is meditation will help you make objective changes in behavior. So if there's something you're doing that you need to stop doing or something you should be doing that you're procrastinating or putting off, you can use meditation skills to behave more skillfully in the world. Reduce suffering, elevate fulfillment, understand yourself at all levels, including the deepest, improve behavior, and ultimately to find within yourself a spirit of serving or contributing to the happiness of others that comes from a spontaneous love. And actually, that spirit of love and service is a consequence of success in the other four dimensions. As you suffer less or more fulfilled, as you understand who you are, and as you have a handle on changing how you carry yourself, all of that sums up ultimately in how you contribute to making this world a better place.

## WORKING on MYSELF (during a solo-retreat in nature) ~

Stephanie Nash

So I've been thinking about this retreat I'm leading. It's only a little three to five day retreat in August 17th and 21st and it's about dismantling stress with mindfulness. And so as I'm sitting here doing my techniques I can't help but think of what I want to share with people. Oh, that would be so much fun.

So I didn't intend to do it till after I got back but I've had time to read books and listen to other people's meditations and practice. Isn't that pretty? Oh look at that. It's so nice here. I'm looking forward to presenting a retreat right after having two weeks too. I'm glad about that.

## Working Smarter ~ Shinzen Young

Sometimes when people first are introduced to your techniques, there can be a bit of an overwhelm because they're not prepared for the technical nature of them. What would you say to people to help them get through that initial overwhelm so that they stick around to get the ultimate simplicity and good stuff it leads to? I would say don't try to understand it, get used to it.

There's a Japanese proverb, which literally means that. It's not a matter of learning it, it's a matter of getting accustomed to it. Someone once asked a very prominent 20th century mathematician, John von Neumann, about the mathematics that he had used during a lecture, they said, Professor von Neumann, I can't understand your math. He said, math is not something you understand, math is something you get used to. When I heard that, it was hugely helpful for me. You listen and you think and you practice and you read and you listen and you think and you practice and you read and you listen and you think and you practice and read over and over and over again, and with time, it sinks in. There is a reason why I formulated that copious and precise vocabulary.

In the long run, it's going to hopefully allow people to work smarter. Because the old-fashioned way, where you have to just sort of discover it on your own, and often it's a brute force method, you just have to put yourself through such horrific ordeals that at some point you're just forced to experience certain states and forced to do certain things. Well, the average modern person is not going to intentionally put themselves through that kind of thing. So my idea was, instead of the brute force methods, if we can make the formulation crystal clear, yes, up front it takes a little bit of work, because it's like we're being sent back to school. It's like, what? I have to learn vocabulary, I have to learn definitions, I have to make subtle distinctions with regards to things that seem irrelevant or that I haven't experienced. So I do understand that people have that resistance at the beginning. There's always strong points and weak points in every way of working. The weak point in the way that I work, one of them, is that up front you're asked to really carefully think about the nature of sensory experience, to have a classificatory system for sensory experience and also for the things that lead beyond sensory experience.

It's described in a vocabulary that is something like the rigor and precision that we would find in mathematics. So it's like, wow, you're right, that's a major stumbling block for people because they don't expect to have to learn to work that way. They're thinking they're coming to a retreat.

Yeah, it's going to be Zen poetry and a finger pointing to the hazy moon and suddenly it's like calculus. What am I doing here? However, my idea is that for that relatively small investment up front, in the end it will allow them to work smarter and be able to achieve the classic goals, I don't necessarily say faster, but with less necessity for horrific intensities. Because when you hear about the sort of traditional trainings that are done... And you're talking monastery... Yeah, monastic intensities, like, wow, who wants to put themselves through that kind of thing? So my idea is by giving people this very precise vocabulary and having them maybe work a little smarter, that in the end, that will allow them to have comparable depth of experience, but still have their normal North American or modern, let's say, comfortable lifestyle. So yes, it's some investment up front, but I think, number one, if they realize how much it's going to help down the line, and number two, if they just take it gradually, just gradually get used to it.

That's what I would say with regards to that. Maybe take a break and do easing up, bearing down and easing up to balance, so that if they've been working very hard, they can ease up and do something that would be less intense. Well, I think you're asking with regards to learning the vocabulary, is that correct? Well, I was actually talking about first coming in

with all the five ways and all the techniques and that potential overwhelm. I remember before the five ways, when I first went to one of your retreats, I said, you know, I was in an online with you and I said, you know, this is like playing scales. This is technical work, I'm having to pay attention and really play scales. And I stopped being a classical musician because I didn't want to practice my scales. And you said, it is like playing scales, but the music is your life.

And I thought, good answer. You know, so that you're developing the skill to use in your life. Well, I would say that the reason I present people with several approaches is not that I necessarily want them to learn how to do all those approaches. I would like them to be exposed to a range of possibilities so that they can find what works for them. Some people like the flexibility of having five contrasting ways of working, but some people will just choose one of those five and decide that's all I'm going to go for.

But at least they can see the range of what is available. And then, so the idea is not that you have to learn this giant system. The idea is all you have to do is find one good technique that works for you. And then if you want to just stay with that, fine. If you want to learn other things, that's fine too.

So I think the combination of realizing that you only need one good technique, plus giving yourself time to get used to the vocabulary and take it slowly, plus realizing that the complexity and the scrupulous precision will in the end pay off because you'll be able to work smarter or get more bang for the buck, so to speak. I think keeping that in mind may help people a little bit with the challenges of studying meditation with a demented physics professor. Somebody once called me that. A demented physics professor. I like that. You can use it.

## Working With Shinzen - Many Options

My name is Stephanie Nash and I am sitting here interviewing Shinzen Yung, who is an innovative meditation teacher who's come up with his own mathematical and scientific journey to zero. And we're going to be talking about a lot of things today, but before we do, I want to make sure everyone knows how to get more of you, how to access video talks of yours on the website. You have MP3s, you do retreats in person, and you also do phone based retreats. So let's just go through these and make sure we know which is which.

First for your personal retreats, if someone wants to come and do a residential retreat with you, they would go to [shinzen.org](http://shinzen.org). That's correct. That's also a site with more than a book's worth of free article content. So that's sort of my personal site and archives of previous work that I've done. So you go to [shinzen.org](http://shinzen.org) and look under my schedule if you want to come to an on-site program with me, or if you want to get like tons of articles. And you can also order CDs.

Yes. You have a whole CD store there. But more modernly, I have an MP3 site.

You are more modern now, aren't you? People would probably go there, although some people like the CDs. The MP3 site is [shinzentalks.com](http://shinzentalks.com), so you can download quite a bit there. The really convenient and really cool site is [basicmindfulness.org](http://basicmindfulness.org). That's one-stop shopping for practice. Cool site.

What's cool about it is all of the things that tend to get in the way of people doing this practice, which means it's hard to get instruction from somebody that you can relate to because they may not live in your area. You can't travel. You can't leave your family. You don't want to incur expenses. You don't want it to take a lot of time. There's a lot of speed bumps that get in the way of having a regular practice. [Basicmindfulness.org](http://Basicmindfulness.org) is my attempt to get rid of those speed bumps for the world. It's one-stop shopping for practice, meaning that we run classes and very, very short micro-retreats that are telephone-based.

Now, when I try to describe this to people, I always get this glazed-over, sort of quizzical look because they can't quite compute, wait, it's in my home, it's a telephone, how does this all work kind of thing. All I can say is just try it. You will see it's very intuitive. You get cheap long-distance calling.

If you don't know how to do that, we've got something on the site that tells you how to get it dirt cheap. You get hands-free operation either with a headset or just a speakerphone. You're not on the telephone all the time, but you are on for interaction with me and for group discussion and for group guided. Then you hang up, you work on your own, and then you come back and you have more discussion.

So all the features that would be present in a residential retreat that might extend for a week, we've economically packed into a four-hour micro-retreat situation. One thing I can say from having done this, actually, when we're on the phone, sometimes there's a greater intimacy. Sometimes on a phone when we talk to people versus in person where you're dealing with that energy.

Having your voice coming in on the phone, also when I'm in my home, it brings the association of the work into my home, but it also feels quite personalized as opposed to being in a room with a lot of people. It's kind of like... There's many paradoxes. People thought, oh, it's going to destroy the sense of group energy. Well, it doesn't destroy it.

It creates a different group energy, but there's still a group energy and I can't explain it, but there is. So you got that. People said, oh, well, it's in my home and in my home is where all my buttons are that I'm going to be distracted and self-indulgent.

I got to go away to a center. Well, what we discovered is counterintuitively, if you do it, you can do it in your home and when you do it, sacramentalizes the home rather than polluting the retreat. Doing it in your home sacramentalizes your home and then you see that you can do it in your home.

So there were many very nice counterintuitive results from this. So basically the second weekend of every month is home retreat practice weekend. We give five independent programs, at least one of which every month is an intro program requiring no previous experience in anything like this whatsoever.

Meaning at any given month, anybody anywhere in the world can get started with the practice and be off and running with a technique and then next month they can come back, maybe do that same technique or learn another technique and it's all there. You just have to go to [basicmindfulness.org](http://basicmindfulness.org), read how to get started. Is there written material? There's written material that has, like [shinzen.org](http://shinzen.org) is this vast archive of stuff, but the audios and the readings at [basicmindfulness.org](http://basicmindfulness.org) is paired down. That's just what you need in order to get started with the practice.

## World Mysticism (with a capital "M") ~ Shinzen Young

So I will not spare you the Sanskrit. Atah yoga nushasanam, yogas chitta vritti nirodhah, tathah drashtu svayam pevasthah. That is the opening lines of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali that Mark alluded to.

It's quite extraordinary. Sutra in the Buddhist sense sometimes generically just means scripture, like chant the sutras and so forth. Pali pronunciation is suta. Although in a more specific sense, sutra means the discourses of the historical Buddha. It's a certain section within the Buddhist literature. However, within the broader context of Indic civilization, sutra has a different meaning. It's a literary form. And the point of this literary form is to condense a science into the shortest possible exposition in terms of numbers of syllables. So the Yoga Sutras describe what's called Ashtangita yoga, or the eight limbs of yoga, sometimes called Raja yoga. And you'll also notice that Buddhism is Arya Ashtangika Marga, and Buddhism has an eightfold path also. Now, even the words are the same.

The eight elements are not the same, but clearly there's influence going back and forth. What it says in Sanskrit is, Yoga is citta vritti nirodha. It is the cessation of the fluctuations of consciousness. Sadādhara-sthira, then and only then, does the true observer abide in its nature. It presents a practice that is very similar in many ways to Buddhism.

On the other hand, it presents a conceptual framework that in some ways is the diametric opposite. Because what we call gone is nirodha, that's cessation. But whereas in Buddhism it's interpreted as no-self, in a Hindu context, particularly in the Yoga Sutra context, it's interpreted as the true self, the true observer. If you are just involved in concepts, like a scholar or a devotee, then it's an endless argument who has the right formulations. But if you're involved in practice, you realize that there are many alternative ways to describe the effects of the practice. And it is also true that sometimes identical vocabulary isn't referring to the same thing at all. So to develop a kind of sensitivity where you know that you can detect when the same words refer to something different, and you can also detect where very different words may refer to very similar things.

That takes a little bit of practice. There was a request in the notes for me to talk about Jewish mysticism tonight, apropos of Shabbat. I'd love to talk about that, but I thought I would frame it in a somewhat larger context and talk about world mysticism.

And then how Jewish and other ones fit in and how what we do fits in. So what comes to your mind when you hear the English word mysticism? Does something pop into your head? Sweat lodge? Something that used to happen to the saints and doesn't happen to regular people like us. Something very special? This is interesting. Other people? What pops into your head when you hear that? Contemplation? Sacredness? Now we're mentioning the word mysticism. It's got an ism on it. That word specifically.

Direct experience of truth. Interesting. Okay.

Did you say direct experience of truth? A whole collection of traditions, spiritual traditions. Cool. Well, let me tell you what pops into my head as soon as I hear that word. What pops into my head is ambiguity. It is dangerous to talk about mysticism as simply a word without realizing that it is used in two very different senses. And the two senses that it is used in is actually rather interesting. So in the sort of colloquial sense, it connotes new agey realms of power kinds of unusual experiences.

Visions, psychic powers, that sort of thing. But as a technical term that would be used by scholars, historians, people who specialize in academic study of religion, it refers to something quite different. It refers to the contemplative endeavor, what we're doing here. So the first thing one needs to be careful about if you're having a discussion with someone

about, quote, mysticism, is to be sure that you're talking about the same mysticism.

Because you could end up in a lot of misunderstanding. So what's the relationship between the two meanings of mysticism? Well, the way that I sort of look at it, you can think of the mystical path as a journey from the surface of consciousness to the source of consciousness. And in making that journey, some people encounter some weird, unusual stuff in the intermediate realms between surface and source. The intermediate realms are, those are the realms of the archetypes. Those are the realms in which gods, ghosts, ancestors, angels can actually be experienced sensorially, perhaps vividly. So in passing from surface to source and going through that intermediate material, some people, or in passing through that intermediate realm, some people have weird experiences. That's mysticism with, I call it mysticism with a small m. Not everyone who passes from surface to source encounters weird, unusual stuff.

But some people do. Now, when you touch the formless source, the salient defining characteristic of touching the formless source is that it profoundly changes your notion of who you are. It's like a paradigm shift. And that's mysticism with a capital M.

That's the way I describe it. So, as several people mentioned, all around the world we find actually both kinds of mystical experience. But the mysticism with a capital M is of course what we're mostly interested in here. Now, for many people, mystical experience in that sense comes about as the result of systematic practice. However, it is important to realize that sometimes people come to these experiences without any formal practice at all. It just happens. Maybe once or twice a year I get an email from someone who hadn't done any meditation, but just one day, like one person put it, one day I was just big.

Or one day the world and myself became paper thin. There but not there. And it's permanent.

It just happens. Now that indicates to me that this is a natural phenomenon. The other thing that indicates to me that it's a natural, in other words, the fact that it just happens without cultivation.

The other thing that indicates to me that it's a natural phenomenon is the relative universality of contemplative or mystical practice around the world. So, if you take the Yoga Sutras, for example, it divides into these eight steps. Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, Samadhi. The first couple steps are about religious customs and ethics. Sort of like getting your act together as a human being in terms of character. And that roughly maps onto what in Buddhism is called Shila. And that also maps onto the first few stages of Saint Teresa's model, which is in a book called *Las Moradas*, the interior castle.

It starts with this sort of like working on your behavior, working on your issues, that kind of thing. Then in the Yoga Sutras, it proceeds through, and of course this is what makes the Indic system in some ways superior to the Western system. It talks about Asana, Pranayama. So, that means working with the breath and postures. That the notion that posture has an impact on consciousness was not appreciated in Western mysticism the way it was in the East. Okay, so then I'm going to skip some details, but then you go through a sequence of ever deepening concentration.

And that's also what's in Teresa's interior castle. After you've sort of got your act together, then she gives many benchmarks over many years, decades of developing more and more concentration power. Now, the Yoga Sutras describe the same thing. And that corresponds roughly to the Buddhist Jhana system, the absorption system. So, we can see that these maps in general will have a component of working on your character, they'll have a component of building concentration power. Then they'll have a component of something else. But here's where things can get very confusing, vocabulary-wise. Because in Buddhism, that something else is looked upon as a kind of transformation of consciousness.



A new way of understanding who you are. And it's called Prajna. So in Buddhism, it precedes Shila, Samadhi, Prajna. When you read St.

Teresa, her interior castle proceeds exactly the same way. Work on yourself as a person, then all these different stages of ever deepening absorption. And then what's amazing is to read very late in life. She had this experience of... And you can see that she's struggling to convey how different it is from everything she experienced before. And she refers to it as an intellectual vision. But she says that's not really what I'm talking about, because it wasn't a vision.

And it's not intellectual. But something shifted. And the salient feature of that was that... Well, the way that she put it, the self-forgetting is so great that it seems as though the soul no longer exists. I mean, anyone with a Buddhist background immediately sees insight into no-self. And it's permanent.

It's permanent. But along with the paradigm of nothingness comes also the paradigm of oneness. They're related. So she also describes this experience as... She says the oneness with God is like the oneness of water in water. Now, she's writing in the 16th century, she's actually writing for the Inquisition. You know, that they would approve what she had to say, because you had to get everything passed, right? By the thought police of Catholic Europe. And it had no difficulty passing. And it became the standard model used by the Catholic Church to this day.

And when I first read this, and I saw, my God, this maps on so clearly to Buddhist experience, it totally blew my mind. Because this is 16th century Spain. A completely different world. Why should this map on to something that someone wrote in 6th century Sri Lanka? These worlds had no contact whatsoever.

And yet they're describing roughly similar maps. So that's mysticism with a capital M. What can be a little confusing is that in the Yoga Sutras, they don't explicitly talk about the wisdom function as being in some way different from the concentration process.

However, it's implied in there. The last three steps in Yoga are called Dharana, Dhyana, Samadhi. So Dharana means holding. That's the stage in concentration where your attention wanders and you have to bring it back. Your attention wanders and you have to bring it back.

You've probably noticed that. That's Dharana. Dhyana, your attention doesn't wander anymore. The description in the Yoga Sutras is that it's like an unbroken stream of sesame oil.

When you pour oil, there's a continuity there. So whatever your object of focus is, your attention stays there. That's called Dhyana. That is the word that corresponds to the Pali word Dhyana.

And clearly there's a relationship, although it's not an exact one-for-one correspondence, but they're pointing to similar general directions. Then there's the final stage in the Yoga path, Raja Yoga path. It's called Samadhi. So remember I said the trick is to know when the same word refers to different things and when different words refer to the same thing.

It can be very tricky to have the sensitivity to be able to smell what's going on. So I've seen endless arguments between Yoga people and Buddhists about Samadhi. Samadhi is where it's at. Samadhi is not where it's at. Samadhi is where it's at.

Samadhi is not where it's at. They're not realizing that they're not really talking about quite the same thing. It's confusing because it's the same syllables and it's closely related, but not exactly the same. Within the Buddhist context, well I showed you the three steps in Buddhism. Shila, Samadhi, Prajna. That's called the Trini-Shikshani, the threefold training.

It's another way of organizing the eightfold path. So within this context and in general within Buddhism, as a general principle, Samadhi is a generic term.

Anything from a light focus to a concentrated state so profound that you don't need to move for days and your physiology is so altered that you might be mistaken for dead. Anything along that whole continuum in Buddhism is called Samadhi. But in the Yoga Sutras, only the deepest part is referred to as Samadhi. And there's actually two kinds of Samadhi distinguished in the Yoga system. There is Sabija Samadhi and Nirvija Samadhi. Samadhi with a seed and Samadhi without a seed.

So what is a seed? A seed is a sensory object that you're focusing on. So let's say for example that you were focusing on music. You wanted to make music your path to enlightenment. So you start listening to music. I went through a period of about three years where I was really bored with meditation. And the only way I could get myself interested was by listening to classical music.

But at least it kept me going. So you're listening to the music and your attention wanders and you bring it back. Your attention wanders and you bring it back. At some point your attention doesn't wander so much anymore. Then at some point, so you know, bring it back, that's dharma. It doesn't wander anymore, it just stays there, that's dhyana in the yoga sense of the word dhyana. But then you can have this experience where there's just the music and there's no sense of an eye listening to the music. You become the music.

That's sabhija samadhi. Well, how does that come about from the paradigm that we've been using here? It's simple. There's only so much real estate in consciousness. If 100% of the awareness is going into the music, that leaves zero awareness to go back to see in, hear in, feel in. So it's identical to Sasaki Roshi's, to the first part of Sasaki Roshi's koan, how do you become free from yourself when you see the flower? Well, he wants you to have a visual experience of just sight and no reactive self.

So that's sabhija samadhi. It's essentially, well, yeah, that's what, but there's bija, there is a sensory event there. There's just all of the attention is allocated to that sensory event. And back where there would have been a self, where there would have been see in, hear in, feel in, there isn't that. There's just the see out or the hear out. But you're still seeing a flower.

You're still hearing the music as sound. A deeper experience is nirbija samadhi, samadhi without a seed. That's formless samadhi. Well, what in the world is that? That is samadhi on God.

That is chittavritti nirodha. That is the cessation of the fluctuations of consciousness. You have such a complete experience of the see out of the flower or the hear out of the music that there's no fixating of the sight or the sound into a thing.

And so there's just the godness of the sight or sound and there's just the godness of the self and they are the same godness. As I say in the yoga sutras, that is described in terms of samadhi. Whereas in Buddhism it would be described in terms of insight into no self and emptiness. So that's the source of the argument between the Buddhist and the yoga practitioners.

It's an inability to realize that sometimes the same word is used in different ways and sometimes different words are used to point to essentially similar things. So if you attain nirbhija samadhi, you have also attained an abiding contact with God. Well, not exactly an abiding contact.

You can't have an abiding contact. You can only have a self that returns and looks back and knows that an instant before it was one with everything. It was one in a nothing experience. But that's the reoccurring of a self. Enlightenment is actually a kind of self. I know that's like hugely confusing. When I first heard Sasaki Roshi say that, enlightenment is a kind of self.

It's like, well, wait a minute. That's totally contrary to what Buddhism says. Enlightenment is no self, right? Well, enlightenment is an experience of no self. But in the moment of experiencing gone or nirbhija samadhi, in the moment of experiencing that, there's no experiencer.

So there's actually no conscious awareness of it. But a second later, a self returns. And it has seeing, hearing, feeling that represent the no self experience that it just had. And as the years and decades proceed, that returning of the self as an enlightened self, it becomes clearer and clearer and clearer. It has a clearer mental image. It has a clearer way of being able to describe. And it has clearer emotions around the experience of no self that it just had. So in the yoga tradition, the goal is to attain sahaja samadhi.

That's at least according to some of the books. What does sahaja mean? Well, sahaja means on the natch, natural. So in this case it means in daily life. It means as you're bopping around in the world thousands of times a day, you have an experience of the one that is the nothing, the completeness that is the cessation. And then you have a clear experience of coming from that. And you know where you just came from.

And you know exactly what your job is. How to get back. How you get back is by not trying to get back, but by completely affirming, saying yes to the re-arising of the personal self. So this is equivalent to, in our system, the working with God and then seeing how we come from and return to that moment by moment. But it's not formulated, as I say, in terms of wisdom or insight quite specifically. So it can be confusing.

It was very confusing to me. Because I thought, well, the yoga system just culminates in high concentration. It doesn't culminate in enlightenment. So it's inferior to the Buddhist formulation. But then later on I realized that that was just an artifact of the language and the way things are described. So all around the world there is both mystical experience with the small m, the new agey, sort of mystical, shmistical realm of power stuff. And then there is mystical experience with the big M. But the different traditions might, the components as far as I can see, the same components are always there.

But they may be language differently or there may be a different emphasis that obscures the fundamental similarity. In the Christian mystical tradition, oh, and I should say, well, what are the components? What are the universal components? Well, I just gave you one formulation, which is shila samadhi prajna. So you sort of work on yourself and you develop high concentration. And then you have something that in Buddhism is described as going beyond concentration. And also Saint Teresa of Avila described it that way, as going beyond concentration states.

So there is a change in your paradigm about what you are, what you're made of, literally. But in the yoga system it's just called nirbija samadhi. And you might not realize, you might think, oh, that's just more concentration. But if you attain chittavrtti nirodha, the cessation of the fluctuations of consciousness, whether you talk about it in those terms or not, your paradigm, your model for what self is, will change.

And there will be a wisdom component there. So one way to look at what's universal is there's work you do on yourself for yourself. There's sort of like work you do to improve yourself. Then there's always a description of the sequence of stages of concentration. And then there is what in Buddhism is described as that which goes beyond concentration, where you gain an insight, which in Buddhism is called emptiness or no-self. So in the Christian way of working, the generic term for the states of high concentration is recollection, meaning not to remember, but to collect back. Okay, re means back, kam means together, and legere means to pick up or to gather. So recollectio, in ordinary English, it means to remember. But as a technical term in a Christian contemplative usage, recollection means what we in Buddhism call samadhi. But if that recollection is very deep, it's called infused contemplation. And that pretty much corresponds to dhyana and that kind of thing.

It's a very deep experience. Now, one of the things that's a little bit confusing is that there is a link between concentration, which is simply the ability to hold a focus. There's a link between concentration and calming and tranquility. And indeed, in the Buddhist system, there is a term, shamatha in Sanskrit or samatha in Pali, that has both of those connotations. It literally, sham means to tranquilize, and ta means to fixate.

So it's a single word that connotes both the tranquilizing aspect and the concentration aspect. That's why in Tibetan, shamatha was translated as shi-ne. Shi means tranquil, ne means abiding, meaning you're able to hold a focus where you want. However, strictly speaking, the calming aspect and the concentrating aspect, although they're obviously very related, they are not identical things. But you need, calming is calming, okay, but you need some calm in order to be able to hold the focus. Conversely, if you're going to hold the focus, things tend to mellow out a little bit.

But in my way of thinking, they're not identical. That's why all the techniques that I teach you have concentration, but the focus on rest technique emphasizes the calming or tranquilizing aspect. So within the Christian way of working, the tranquilizing aspect is very much emphasized. And so another term that's used is prayer of quiet, oratio quies. So the emphasis is on getting into these deep tranquil states, and the paradigm for what happens in those deep tranquil states is the soul unites with God. And that is certainly a legitimate paradigm. That's a way to think about it. Within the Islamic mystical way of working, we find the same elements.

What's Islamic mysticism called? Sufism. So we find the same elements. The paradigm for what happens is also similar. What is supposed to happen is something called FANAQ, F-A-N-A. And what that means in Arabic is nirota. It means annihilation. So the sense of personal self is seen through annihilated, and one experiences a FANAQ fil-lah, which means a disappearance of the somethingness of self that allows you to melt into Allah, into God. So we see something roughly similar to the Christian paradigm, sort of like merging with God kind of thing.

What about Jewish mysticism? Well, Jewish mysticism has two paradigms. One is something called dvekut, or in the Ashkenazic pronunciation dvekas. You know that there's two pronunciations of Hebrew.

I was right on the transition. My first Hebrew classes when I was a kid, we learned the Eastern European pronunciation. Then when Israel achieved statehood and decided to go with the Sephardic, so then they shifted in my synagogue and I had to relearn the whole thing again. It's not that bad, but it really didn't sound like Hebrew. But anyway, so dvekut is the proper Sephardic Israeli pronunciation.

And dvekut is, I guess it would be written in English, D-E-V-E-K-U-T. That's the oneness paradigm. So that is there.

And it's talked about. And the idea is that you can achieve dvekut with anything. If you fully focus on anything that you're doing, you can have this sense of, it becomes a merging experience. But there's another paradigm that's used in Jewish mysticism that I personally find extremely interesting. Because you don't see anything like it in Christian mysticism. You don't see anything like it in Islamic mysticism. This second paradigm.

But where you do find this second paradigm is in Sasaki Roshi's formulation of Buddhism. So years ago I was in Montreal, we were having a seshin, a Zen retreat, at this Zen center that is like half of Leonard Cohen's house. He was born in Montreal, so he gave half of his house that he owns there to make a Zen center, and then he kept the other half to live in. So he and I were staying in the half where he lives. And so I woke up one morning and he was studying, looking at the Talmud. And so I said, what are you doing? And he said, well, these Talmud, that's like the Jewish sort of Abidarma, I guess you could say, to mix metaphors.

He said, these guys were trying to get to what Roshi is teaching, or something to that effect. So there is this paradigm of Bri'a Yesh Me'ay, that as I say among the western forms of mysticism, as far as I know, only Judaism has this one. Judaism has the merging with God, Dev'et Kut thing, that as I say, is so characteristic of the other Abrahamic religions, Christianity and Islam.

But Judaism has this other thing, and this other thing is actually the main paradigm. What does Bri'a Yesh Me'ay mean? Well, Bri'a means creation, Yesh means existence or something, or self, has all of those connotations. And Me' means from, and Ayin means divine nothingness. So how is it that the infinite somethings of self and world arise from the one very special nothing that is God? To understand clearly that process is the central goal of Jewish mysticism.

I remember years ago, here in LA, having lunch with a Chabad Rabbi, which is a form of, quote, ultra-orthodox. And I said, sum it up for me, what's your trip about? I don't think I used the word trip. It was something like, okay, lay it on me, what's the final goal here? He said, well, the final goal is in ordinary life, to be able to, in each moment of experience, experience how that moment is coming from and returning to God. And one way that that's formulated is what I just said, Bri'a Yesh Me'ayim. Another way that it's formulated is in the phrase, Shifti Hashem L'Nikdi T'amid. This is a really, really interesting phrase in Hebrew. I spent, actually, literally an entire morning in Israel with one of the top biblical scholars.

I mean, secular type scholars, objective scholars, on the Hebrew language. Discussing, she just filled in all of these rich connotations of the phrase that I just said in Hebrew. So what it means is, literally, to, you can't even translate it into English, but it means to always equate what is in front of you with God. So what does it mean to equate? Well, there's a superficial way that that's done in Jewish mysticism, and there's a deep way that that's done. The superficial way is that you use the associations of the Hebrew language to constantly have things remind you, conceptually, of God. So that's a sort of intellectual way of trying to be thinking about God all the time.

But that's just the beginning of continuous contact, though. The deeper experience is not sort of using all of these associations. It's not this intellectual endeavor. It's a perceptual endeavor. So the deeper meaning of Shifti Hashem L'Nikdi T'amid, to have God in front of your eyes all the time, is to literally have God in front of your eyes. So that means that you're experiencing what's, quote, in front of your eyes, in other words, what's in your senses, what you see, hear, and contact through your body. You're experiencing the inner part of that, the self, and the outer part, the world.

You're experiencing that coming from and returning to the source moment by moment. In order to be able to have that experience, how is that achieved? Well, you have to be willing to go through a process called B'tul Hayesh, which in Hebrew means the annihilation of the somethingness within you. Sound familiar? When you're gifted, or put in our terms, you have to see the gone of self and world many, many, many, many, many times before you start to have a clear perception of how that gone manifests, how that nothing manifests all, the one nothing manifests the myriad somethings of self and world. So, how does that occur? Well, according to the Jewish formulation in Kabbalah, it occurs through the it, meaning the manifestation of self and world.

It occurs through an interplay of two forces. Why am I not surprised? Chesed and grura. Chesed is affirmation, expansion.

Grura is negation, contraction. And in between these two, there is something called tzimtzum. They pull apart and they create a cleft. And in that cleft, self and world arise moment by moment.

So this should sound rather similar. It is utterly extraordinary to me that Sasaki Roshi's paradigm maps on this closely with the Kabbalistic point of view. Because, although he's

well studied within the Buddhist tradition, I am sure he has no knowledge of the Jewish meditative tradition. And certainly the Jewish meditative tradition that was formulated centuries and centuries ago in Europe and the Middle East never heard of Sasaki Roshi.

So it blows my mind how similar it is. So within the Buddhist tradition, if you've ever studied Zen, you probably learned the Heart Sutra. This is a famous sutra in the sense of scripture that's chanted. And the lines go, kanji zaibosagyo jin anyahara mitaji shoken gongun kaiku do issai kuyaku shari shi shikifuri ku kufuri shigi Okay, so when the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara was practicing prajnaparamita, he slash she clearly saw that all the five aggregates are empty and that that was the secret for passing beyond all suffering. And then Avalokiteshvara begins to speak to Shariputra. So who is Shariputra? Shariputra was the historical Buddha's chief disciple. And Shariputra is associated with the Abhidharma. And the Abhidharma is this formulation in Buddhism that classifies the world and sensory experience with the point of view of that you can't if you sort of untangle these elements, you will be able to become free.

So that's actually very true. But the problem is that at some point people started to just read the Abhidharma and not practice meditation. And they equated learning these lists of categories with enlightenment. So then Mahayana arose by way of reaction and said, hey, just learning these lists of elements isn't going to enlighten you.

You have to have a direct experience of shunyata, of emptiness. So Avalokiteshvara representing the Mahayana point of view speaks to Shariputra representing the sort of scholastic Hinayana point of view. And what does Avalokiteshvara say? He says, shikhi fu i ku, ku fu i shikhi. Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. Now the Zen people riff on that line big time, okay, because of the way it's phrased. Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. When a Zen teacher gives a taisho on that portion of the scripture, inevitably they will say that this summarizes the entire path and that the phrase, form is emptiness, shikhi fu i ku, and the phrase, ku fu i shikhi, emptiness is not different from form, that these are two sides to the practice. Form is emptiness is bitul hayesh, it's the experience of the annihilation of somethingness.

In terms of our system, it's flow and go, okay, it's dissolving back into flow and nirodha, cessation. Form is emptiness, but then that's only half of enlightenment. The other half is to understand in specific how emptiness manifests form.

Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. So how does emptiness manifest form? Well, originally there is zero, but zero is inherently unstable, because there is no actual zero. Zero is just what comes about when all the yeses and all the noes needed to create this or any conceivable universe all balance and cancel. That's why the nothingness of the mystic is a rich nothingness, because it contains infinite positive and negative in a cancelled out condition. So, originally there is nothing, but there actually isn't a nothing.

There's just the cancelling of affirmation and negation. So, nothing is inherently unstable and it breaks apart. And part of it only knows to affirm and that expands, and the other part only knows to negate and that contracts. And that creates a cleft, which is the time-space volume for each moment of sensory experience. This is how Sasaki Roshi describes the passage from emptiness to form. And it happens to be, as far as I can see, the way that the Jewish mystics describe it. And I haven't seen this description anywhere else in the world. That blows my mind.

It's like, wow, this is really cool. So, bina means to know in the sense of separating things, to make discriminative knowing. Da'at is to know in the biblical sense, to know in a penetrating way. Like, you know by, it's like carnal knowledge.

You have soaked into the thing. That's da'at. And Chokhmah is the wisdom that is a spiritual paradigm shift. It's enlightenment. That's exactly the three meanings in the word vipassana. Vipassana means to separate out the strands, vipassana, to see separate. But vipassana also

means vipassana, to see through or into. So I teach you how to separate the strands of experience, and then how to let your awareness soak into them so that you can see that they're just made out of vibrating space.

Expansion, contraction, holds them moment by moment. And if you see that clearly enough, you have vipassana in the sense of insight or wisdom. So in Pali vipassana, in Sanskrit vipashyana, it's one word with three connotations. In the Hebrew language, they actually have three words for each of these kinds of notes, one for each of these kinds of knowing. But they, yes, combine it into a single acronym, at least with this particular group of ultra-Orthodox Jews, and it's Chabad, and that's what they're about.

So once again, the parallels are rather striking. So when I had lunch and I said, OK, what is it, what is it, you know, what's your thing about? He said, well, reayesh ma'ayim, through bitul hayesh, to annihilate the somethingness of self, which will then allow you to experience a special nothingness. So that's the part of the path that is form, is emptiness. And the Orthodox way of praying, where you, it's body prayer, you move, OK? The idea is that you're trying to become like a flame without any fixation whatsoever, and hopefully at some point in that process, God will blow out the flame, which is exactly nirvana now, isn't it? Exactly what that means, the flame gets blown out. So the actual, that Orthodox Jewish body prayer that I love, because it's so much better than mind prayer, is, that's the whole goal.

You're actually trying to be, like, move like a flame and become so flowy that at some point it'll get blown out and you'll experience bitul hayesh. So that's the part of the path which, in terms of our system, is sort of related to the gods, right? But in Zen formulation, that's shikhi fuiku, that's form is emptiness. Then, when that becomes clear, then you can see the other side of the picture, how it is that God breaks apart and vibrates self and world into existence, and you know where you just came from. Now that person that knows where it just came from and knows where the world just came from, sensorially, that's called an enlightened person. So that the goal, according to this rabbi, was you heroically throw caution to the wind and let the source annihilate the somethingness within you. So that's bitul hayesh. As a result of that, you'll be gifted in daily life with bri'ayesh me'ayim. And as a result of living your life that way, you can optimally contribute to something called tikkun olam, the mending of the world.

## "AUTO WALK" ~ demonstrated by SHINZEN YOUNG

So, I like to give people the option of practicing every kind of meditation technique that has ever been developed in the history of world mysticism. And I have this sort of grid where I classify all the techniques, like a periodic table of meditation strategies.

So, I try to include in that everything that was a major invention or a major innovation. Some things in meditative technology have only been discovered once, many things have been discovered many times in different cultures. So, one thing that, as far as I know, was only strongly emphasized once is the notion of expressing spontaneity through how you move, how you speak, and the motor part of how you think. This is an aspect of liberation practice that was very much appreciated and developed within the Chan school of Chinese practice.

It's particularly associated originally with a master named Mazu, and that eventually evolved into the Linji or Rinzai, as it's called in Japanese school of Zen. So, they put a big emphasis on manifesting impermanence, manifesting emptiness, manifesting non-self in how you move the body, how you sort of channel the words that are coming through your lips, and eventually also learning how to think without thinking. So, there's sort of like, if you do without thinking, there's a just happeningness and it's merged with the dynamic emptiness of nature, yang and yin. If you speak without thinking, same thing. A little trickier is to think without thinking, but it's the same general idea. It turns into thoughts that are spontaneous, creative, wise, and so forth. So, traditionally in Buddhism, they speak of the three karma-dvara, the three gates of action, kaya-vak-citta or kaya-vak-mana, means bodily motions, speech actions, and thought actions. So, I have in my repertoire of techniques a quadrant of training that I call spontaneity training.

And I teach people how to access spontaneity in body movement, speech, thought, and even all three at the same time. So, my word, just to have a convenient word for this just happening, empty but rich dynamic quality in motion, to have a word for it, I call it auto from the original Greek meaning spontaneous. Corresponds to certain Asian concepts, the Chinese notion of ziran, which is shizen in Japanese.

And there's many words in Tibetan that have this connotation of effortless just happening. Anyway, I call it auto to have a word for it. So, there's a technique of auto-walk or more broadly auto-move, auto-speak, and a specific example of that would be auto-chant, which is relatively easy to do. And then I even have an auto-think technique. So, the way you do auto-move is you just sort of tune into some motion that your body already knows how to do. And you just sort of follow the reflex.

You taste the reflexness, the fact that the motor circuits know how to do it without there needing to be much of a thinking ego for it to happen. So, it's like being a little kid. When little kids walk, they just walk for the fun spontaneity or they run for the fun spontaneity or they, you know, like play around in puddles of water or whatever because it's just like, it just happens and they enjoy the just happeningness of it. So, to do the auto-walk, you tune into the fact that your body knows how to walk without needing a you. And it's a little intuitive. I can't really describe quite how to do it, but you just sort of get a feel for it with time. In the monastery, the way that people learn about this is by watching other people do it during the work periods or as you're walking from place to place. People do this sort of just walking thing, the more senior monks, and then you sort of pick up on it. So, I'm going to show you my particular way of doing the auto-walk. I'm pretty poorly coordinated so it's not going to be very elegant, but there will be a kind of spontaneity to it. So, you just sort of let your legs carry you. You know, I sort of defocus the gaze and it's just sort of happening and it's sort of fun.



It's like you're being a little kid again. Now, I add a feature that is not required, which is I engage the visual field. It seems, in addition to this sort of, my legs know how to carry me without me. As I'm moving, it seems like the visual field is expanding in front, but the thing that I just saw an instant ago is collapsing behind me. So, it's like being a bolus being carried in this funnel of expanding light in front and contracting light behind. Then, I combine that with the sort of spontaneity of the movement of the legs and it's like space itself is just sort of carrying me as I'm walking along. I'm exaggerating now.

I don't look this silly usually, but you get the general idea. It's just sort of expansion and contraction and the legs are just sort of moving on their own. You could just like play like this for a long time and it's rich because it's dynamic, it's bouncy, but it's empty because there's no one there. That was me making Shinzen do auto-walk for everyone on YouTube. Shin heads everywhere. And tomorrow, I'm going to get him to do auto-walk while auto-talking, auto-speaking, while auto-thinking. So, stay tuned for more.

## "AUTO-CHANT" or "AUTO-SPEAK" ~ Shinzen Young

Most people, at least occasionally in their life, have had the experience of just sort of starting to flap their lips and magically something self-organized. I call that auto-speak. So I wondered, is there a way to sort of train people so that that's more likely to happen in their daily life? So one way to do that is through a process that I call auto-chant. You take something that you're very familiar with. Some people use mantras or scriptures, but it can be anything that you're thoroughly familiar with, and you chant it out loud, and you just sort of let your speech organs self-organize.

So it's the auditory analog of the auto-walk. Now we want techniques that we can use in a secular context, say in a clinical medical situation or in a school, so we won't encourage people to use things that are explicitly religious or from a foreign culture when we go into these mainstream situations. But I mean, if you belong to a certain religion or like a certain culture, you can chant things like Om Namah Shivaya or Om Mani Padme Hum or Pater Noster, Ave Maria, whatever appeals to you.

But in a secular context, I like to use something simple, so maybe numbers. So here's auto-chant by the numbers. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. And I'm sort of tuning in to the fact that there's just air blowing across my teeth and tissues are flapping and they sort of know what to do. And it's fun. I should say that in some religious traditions, they have what's called glossolalia. And by the way, that's not just in charismatic Christian things in North America. There are analogs of that in other cultures.

I saw it in Japan at Mount Koya, for example. And something like that happens in subud, which is in an Islamic context in Indonesia. This is what's called speaking in tongues. Now what's significant about the glossolalia or speaking in tongues is it's auto.

So actually, they're right. It is sort of the spirit. Now sometimes there's a belief that they're actually speaking grammatical human languages like Aramaic or what have you. Unfortunately, that is apparently not the case. So the content may not actually be human speech, but the contour is truly the spirit. So there's a validity to that, and it can be honored as that. So that's auto speak.

## "AUTO-EVERYTHING" ~ Shinzen Young

So, taken together, I have four standard techniques for training people into what I sometimes jokingly call the Zen bounce or spontaneity or cultivating flow within your motor circuits. So one technique is auto move, and an easy way to do that I demonstrated, sort of the auto walk thing. Another technique is auto speak, and an easy way to do that is like auto chant. The way to cultivate spontaneity and thought is the auto think technique. I described that briefly. There's actually some more details, but the good news on that is I have a very complete blog in my blog spot where I talk in total detail about how to do the auto thinking technique. So that's a third technique. Often, I'll use a strategy of having people work with individual elements and then having people work with the whole system. So if you want to get crazy, you can auto everything.

It means you try to taste your body moving while you sort of do some sort of chant, and you're covering your mind space and aware of a global unfixed state there. You're doing that all together. So that would look something like this. 1, 2,3, 4, 5,6, 7, 8, 9, 10. 1, 2,3,4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. 1, 2... Thank you.

## "AUTO-THINK" ~ Shinzen Young

There's also a technique that I call auto-think, which is a way of training a person to think without thinking. Now you might say, well, how in the world do you train someone into that? How do you train the muse to talk to you? How do you train intuition and creativity? Well, it's actually a fairly involved procedure, but I can give you just a brief description.

It starts with something that anyone can do. You track mental activity in terms of four possibilities. See, hear, see-hear, and rest. So see means you're having a mental image, hear means you're having mental talk.

See-hear means you're having mental image and mental talk at the same time. But rest means that the system is not active, your mental screen is blank and your head is quiet at the same time. Or in the most extreme case, it means that both image space and talk space have vanished, mind space has collapsed to a dimensionless point. But even if that doesn't happen, you can still be aware of rest or absence of activity, which I describe as the mental screen is blank and the head is quiet. So that's a relative rest, and you can also have absolute rest in your mind. Otherwise, your mind is active, and that can only happen in one of three ways, image, talk, or both at the same time.

So you track that, and then you get some momentum, and then you can move to a more challenging procedure, which is to cover mind space. Place some attention in image space, some attention in talk space. Mind space sort of has a front and a back.

Images tend, it's a little more complex than this, but they tend to center sort of in front. Mental talk tends to be in the head at the ear. So just like the body has a front and a back, your mind, roughly speaking, has an anterior and posterior space. And so you cover mind space, and you just sort of, Freud would have maybe called it evenly hovering.

Is that a phrase that he used? So what he used, talking about the outside, we're talking about evenly hovering on the inside. So you cover mind space, and that's actually not as easy for most people as noting the mind states, meaning tracking image talk, both or none. But if you're able to cover mind space, that could be very useful. And then a certain window of opportunity might present itself. There might be a global, unfixated state. Either it's all rest all the time, or it's active, but it's just a subtle vibration of activity, or there are surface thoughts, but they immediately go away.

So you're never carried away. That's a global, unfixated state. Now, if you maintain a global, unfixated state, it may evolve into a situation where you're actually thinking again, but the thoughts are just self-organizing. They're just happening on their own, and they're creative, and they're insightful. And now you're into a state of auto-think. You've actually trained yourself to do that. Now that's a window of opportunity. If that opens, you use it, but if it doesn't, and you have difficulty covering the mind space, then fine, you just go back to noting the mind states. So it's a kind of algorithm that loops and branches, and then with time will tend to induce in a person the ability to think without thinking, or to have thoughts without a thinker, that sort of self-organize and carry an energy of creativity and or insight.

## "Bouncy" Zen vs. "Paint-by-Numbers" Vipassana ~ Shinzen

Young

I will say in appreciation of the Zen tradition that there is a certain kind of dynamic vitality in the Zen style of enlightenment. It's just a style, okay? It's not like, you know, oh, well, Zen starts where all this other stuff ends. It's not that way at all. I think that's just BS to claim that, okay? But the way that the Zen people express enlightenment in their actions has a kind of bouncy vitality to it and spontaneity that is the result of a certain style of cultivation.

That's where I see the strongest impact of style. People can get enlightenment doing vipassana practice and sometimes it's a sort of inert enlightenment. I mean, it's great, okay, compared to non-enlightenment. I mean, there's just no comparison. But there can sometimes be a kind of flatness to it.

Not inevitably, I'm just saying sometimes. Whereas the Zen people have this sort of bouncy experience of nothingness that they're able to convey. What part of the practice of the Zen? It's the lifestyle. The Zen lifestyle where, see, basically if I were to contrast vipassana and Zen in a gross oversimplification, I would say that in vipassana you observe your experience first and you come to an experience of the flow of impermanence and then maybe somewhere down the line, maybe you begin to ride on that flow of impermanence in how you speak and move in the world. In Zen, before you realize the impermanent nature of experience, the lifestyle is forcing you to ride on impermanence because you have to run around and stop on a dime. Run around like crazy, stop on a dime.

Sounds like my life. Am I doing that? No, because in daily life that just leads to freneticness and confusion. But within the context of Zen training, if it works out well, it leads to an ability to manifest and disappear. Manifest and disappear in your actions and then with time you come to experience that as being the nature of experience. So you sort of act it out first and then realize it.

So whereas in vipassana you realize it and then maybe ride on it or maybe not. So the advantage to the Zen training when it really works is that it guarantees this dynamic expression of enlightenment. The possible disadvantage is because it is in some ways sort of like daily life, maybe if it doesn't work, all it's going to end up doing is making you frenetic and confused. So there's advantages and disadvantages. The vipassana way of working may not lead to the vitality, but it's like a paint by numbers kit. It's likely to at least lead to something like a work of art. Zen is sort of like, here's the canvas, there's the paints. Now do it. But when it works, it has a stunning vitality to it that you may not find in the paint by numbers kit.

## "Focus on Rest" as one of the "5 Ways" ~ Shinzen Young

You're talking about your background in math and science, your understanding of all the comparative religion, and how your background has come and the precision of language, and using everything else to create these five ways that are pulling on all this tradition. Can you give me an example of these five ways, or describe this to me? Certain ways. Are these techniques, are these like five different techniques that you do? That is correct. It's five different focus techniques, each one of which represents a modern secular version of something that somebody innovated in the past within a tradition. Does this have to deal with what you're focusing on that you talked about earlier? That's correct. Is each one of these focusing on something else? Essentially, yes. Oh, okay. Can you just give me an example of what these...

Certainly. What you're focusing on here? One of the strong influences is from early Buddhism. In early Buddhism, they had practices that involved attaining states of deep tranquility. Those are sometimes referred to as absorption practices.

Other words are used, jhana, J-H-A-N-A, and so forth. The idea there was to create a positive feedback loop. You focus on a pleasant, restful experience. The more you focus on it, the more pleasant it is, motivating you to focus more. That creates a positive feedback loop that revs up your concentration power. I've taken and I've reworked that system into a technique that I call focus on rest. Most people, when they think about the word meditation, they probably don't think about concentration power. They probably think of something that's going to cool me out.

Well, that's... Stress reduction. I was going to say, I'm stressed or the mind's spinning. You're just saying focus on rest. To me, that's like saying I'm going to go to sleep. How do you keep people from going to sleep if you're focusing on something restful? Just take a nap.

Very good point. Remember I said that I've taken these innovations from the past and I put them on a uniform footing within the framework of mindfulness. Now, you'll remember I defined mindful awareness as a threefold attentional skill set consisting of concentration power, sensory clarity, and equanimity. Let's see how we can have an experience that is very blissful, tranquilizing, and would be a stress reduction, cool out, mellow out, feel good kind of practice. How we can have that as a builder of concentration, clarity, equanimity.

Here's how we do it. I teach people how to detect, create, and focus on six distinct sensory flavors of rest. Of course, I don't teach them all at once.

I teach it one at a time so you learn them gradually. One is physical relaxation. Another is to find a blank mental screen. Another one is quiet in your head, mental quiet.

What if I never have quiet in my head? Then just focus on one of the other ones. That's why I give you six. Oh, okay. Sounds good. There's a high probability that you'll be able to find, create, deepen, and enjoy at least one of those six. So it's a numbers game.

Sounds good. Maybe you can't have quiet but you can have relaxation. Maybe you can't have emotional peace but you can find the blank mental screen. So I like to give people a number of options so we find, number one, what they relate to, and number two, what they find pleasant and interesting and natural and works. So I teach you how to find, create certain pleasant restful states. When your attention wanders, you bring your attention back. That's developing your concentration piece.

The restful states... Even if it's focusing on relaxation in the body. That's the focus. So if my mind goes somewhere, I just bring it back to the relaxation in my body and then I'm increasing my concentration? Absolutely, because you can develop your concentration with

any sensory experience, any experience whatsoever.

That seems like a good way to go. Well, that was the idea behind the absorption practices, that you find these natural, pleasant experiences so you're motivated to keep coming back and it creates that positive feedback. So your attention wanders, you come back to the pleasant restful experience.

Wanders again, you come back. The more you focus, the better you feel. The better you feel, the more you want to focus.

Certainly this is going to rev up your concentration power. The restful states like relaxation, peace, emotional peace, quiet, or defocusing your eyes, your external gaze, you can defocus. That produces a kind of God's felt, as they say in perceptual psychology.

That produces alpha waves automatically. Anyway, the restful states tend to open you so that they create an environment where equanimity is likely to happen. You'll be less fighting with whatever's coming up. So they induce equanimity. The other thing is, I teach you not just to cool out and mellow out, but to distinguish up to six distinct flavors of rest. God's sensory clarity.

# "JUST LAUGHING" - a Mindfulness Meditation ~ STEPHANIE

NASH

So what we're going to do is you're going to close your eyes and I will guide it from the top of your head. So we're now going to do a meditation called a laughing meditation.

And laughing is optional. And feel free to jump in at any time but I will give some guidance. Or maybe I won't. Feel free to slap your hand if you want. Put your hand over your shoulders. And whether you laugh or not, you can tune into expansion and contraction, cessation, and expansion, and contraction, and cessation, and contraction, and expansion, and contraction, and expansion, and contraction, and expansion, and contraction, and expansion, and contraction. Hmmm Time to get some sleep ございます It's a good abdominal workout.

Did you guys not? I did. I'm going to take a nice deep pleasure. We'll sigh, really big breath in. We need another one. Big breath in.

That was 10 minutes. In honor of all laughing meditation people everywhere. Close your eyes and tune into your body. What's going on? If sounds happen, it's just like laughter shock.

If you have to laugh, laugh. Just really tune in and feel the flow. Where are you feeling? Anything that wants to spread, let it. Open to the massage from the inside through the body.

What's the face feel like? Belly, hands, feet, whole body. It's very serious. Hear the sounds of laughter. Other people's laughter. Feel it on your body.

Mm. I'm going to die. I'm going to die. I'm going to die. As much as it pains me to do this.



## "MEDITATION BAR" (a comic dharma skit) ~ STEPHANIE NASH

Lazy music playing. I don't know about you, but after a good retreat, there's nothing I like better than to head down to my local meditation bar and throw back a few techniques. Maybe even take home a good procedure or two. There's a lot of good places around here, Purification Pub, the Hachmad Hetch, Epikey Attic, Anicca Annex, and the Axis of Ego, which is too noisy for my tastes.

Just doesn't have a good feel to it. Oh, and there's the Clarification Cafe. They got booths for eating meditation there. A mechanical hand comes down and stops your arm right as you lift the food. Then a voice comes on saying, meditate on that.

Yeah, they got therapists in the next room for when it doesn't work out. My favorite place is the Vipassana Vortex. Used to be called Zen It Is when it was owned by this guy named Roshi, but he had a lot of activity and moved on to another level of consciousness.

The Vipassana Vortex is situated in a way that you can see right through it. Over the door is a color monitor running Doth in black and white. And something in Sanskrit or Pali or maybe it's Chinese.

I'm told it translates a part sight, through sight, and insight. All fit fits welcome. Cho greets me at the door. She runs the place. A great dame with a solid gold heart and a smile to match.

She says, is that a guru in your pocket or are you just happy to be here? I smile and head over to the bar for a clarity cocktail. I got some fuzzy aspects. I could use a good buzz. The bliss bunnies are circulating and free floating throughout the room giving out labels. Sometimes they take you upstairs and show you a rising and falling.

There's usually some flow there too. There's my friend Will. He's got a horse named Charlie.

Yeah, Will's a lot like Charlie Horse, but he'll never see it. I see Shinzi over at his usual booth. He owns the place. You can tell his booth by the charts and graphs. Yeah, he's a geek and into Zen mathematics, but don't let the glasses fool you. He may be able to say Samadhi in a dozen languages, but he can get your sunscapes flowing better than nasal spray.

He reportedly has a bank account with the big guy with more zeros than you want to know about. Upstairs there's also a Gawanka parlor. They do piercings.

They start with the nose and are sometimes known to pierce through the whole body. If you're into that kind of thing. Back when Roshi owned the place, it was a Zen arcade. A lot of parlor games, learning to clap with one hand, making faces like before you were born, that kind of thing. There was a big flower in the corner, and if you could get inside of it and get out without anybody seeing you, you could get a ride on the complete experience, which is no ordinary ride.

Supposedly, it is the best thing that ever happens to you, except you can't remember a thing. Yeah, the main Zen thing around here these days is the Merge With Us conference call, and you can practice the program at home. Yeah, I guess you can now merge at local or long distance rates, but information is always free. That noise? Some deconstruction happening up on the third floor. The place is in pieces, but I hear they got rid of a lot of unnecessary crap that was just gumming up the works. I hear the view's gonna be a lot better now. Oh, it's almost time for the last show. It's a good act. A singer with a dress so tight, all you can see is expansion and contraction and some undulation.

Lots of good body sensations. Her name is Melissa Mana. Yeah, she's a bit self-absorbed, but she sings a good song. Sometimes the show is solid, sometimes restful, but it always flows, and before you know it, it is over, gone, kaput. I chill with the solid, hang with the restful, and go with the flow, and when it's over, nothing, nada, zero.

But that's how it goes. Yeah, I'm going back to the bar for a second clarity cocktail before the show. I wanna get a good seat. It's been nice chatting with you. Or have I been some internal talk and mental image taking you away from being here now? The only way for you to know for sure is to wake up. Good luck with that.

## "Say What You Mean" ~ Shinzen Young

So, one of the things that I really encourage people to do is train themselves to quote say what you mean. You know where I got this phrase from? Say what you mean? It's from literature actually, sort of classic in English literature. It's by a book, it's, the author of the book is named Charles Dodson. Doesn't ring a bell? Well that was his real name. His nom de plume was Lewis Carroll. So Lewis Carroll is known as the writer of children's books and Charles Dodson is known as the Victorian period mathematician. There's even a theorem named after him.

Not a theorem but a mathematical process. And in fact, uh oh, now I'm going to get on a geek out. Okay, so I've got to rein myself in. This is the problem, okay.

I just sort of, whatever comes up pours out. So the Mad Hatter's Tea Party, it contains a pun that almost no one realizes. A mathematical pun. Tea was also a letter that was used as a variable, okay, in his day by people who were insisting on the use of imaginary numbers and complex variables and things like that. Dodson was actually a very old fashioned kind of mathematician. He was more in the old fashioned Euclidean mathematics. And he actually didn't like the new math, the new math of the Victorian period, which probably seems like very old math.

But actually he was like wrong. Complex variables turned out to be like this hugely, hugely useful thing, which I'll give a whole Dharma talk on one of these days. In any event, yeah, so the tea is a mathematical pun, the tea party. Anyway at the Mad Hatter's Tea Party, there's a dialogue with Alice and the Marsh Hare and the Dormouse and the Mad Hatter, in which each of those people tell Alice in no uncertain terms to mean what you say is completely different from saying what you mean. The Mad Hatter says, said something like, you need to say what you mean. Alice says, well I always mean what I say. And then they get on this big riff about, hey, these aren't the same at all at all at all. To say what you mean means that you have an idea, and when it comes out in words, it's accurate. And it turns out that that's not such an easy thing to do.

It takes a lot of training, a lot of care. We're not stupid, we know what we're saying, and in our mind it's evidence-based and logical, but if you really listen to yourself saying it, okay, sometimes you're not really saying what you mean. What's in your mind is not what the words actually are. So I've spent a long, long time trying to train myself to be careful about that, and I'm a little bit, how shall I say, finicky, prissy, fussy about you folks learning how to do the same thing, because I think it's extremely useful. But it's also really hard, and the reason that I know it's hard is even though I work at it and I'm pretty good at it, I'm amazed how many times I myself end up not really quite accurately saying what I mean, which is, it happens, it's okay. Every once in a while, in retrospect, I look back and I realize to my horror that I said the opposite of what I meant, and that's like bad, which I did last night.

I don't know if you know what I'm talking about, maybe you can guess. What I was trying to convey is that this path is available to the entire spectrum of culture and philosophy and politics, and that conservative people, which I refer to as, quote, Republicans and so forth, should be as comfortable within this setting as any other people. I glory at the notion that that is the case, can be the case, but it came out sounding like I was sort of making fun of conservative and Republican people.

That is actually the way it came out, which was exactly the opposite of what I had in my head. So, bad, bad, bad, which someone pointed out to me, and I said, okay, when you're right, you're right. So, anyway, that's, I think, a really important point. The types of people that in our culture would be called conservatives were the types of people that in the context of Asia were my teachers, and they saved my soul. So, anyway, just wanted to

mention that.

## "Vermont News" - comic skit by Stephanie Nash

Oh, this just in. We have an on the scene live report from Melanie Mash in Burlington. Thanks, Bob.

I am here on the west side of Burlington, Vermont, just outside the forest next to Lake Champlain. A possibly homeless man who locals have reported often meanders in the very well maintained paths of the forest and is reported to go by the name the Head Chin or the Big Chin was seen drunkenly walking down the path muttering 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. And he kept waving and pointing to a piece of paper with nonsensical symbols on it, muttering that it had his whole system on there and that he looked at it every day and that it was the solution to McDermott. He was in a trench coat, which he called his robes, and wearing a sign that said on the front, think dimensionally, and on the back, optimize the happy. Then he returned to this kind of spastic walking, telling the crowd that he was auto-walking and that they should try auto-thinking so that they could meet Gus.

We're not sure who Gus is, possibly an imaginary friend. Everyone assumed at this point that the man was intoxicated and then he started marching and chanting, Trump is empty, Obama is empty. And that's when a real crowd started to gather, assuming it was actually a political rally.

People wanted to join in the chant, but were confused as to which side he was on. When someone asked him, he stopped and looked at them and said, the source, and so are you, and everything is loved into existence in each moment. At which point they assumed this wasn't political after all, but that he was a religious fanatic. But then he asked if anyone had some Kickapoo joy juice, and then said that he had been abducted by aliens who did a lot of anal probing. Yes, Bob, that's when they realized he was delusional and the authorities were called. And then he returned to the counting and walking, only to stop and declare that he had no self, which had a bounciness and connectivity. And then he proceeded to say he could see, hear, and feel while waving his arms and pretending to have a theory. By this point, there was a huge crowd around him who seemed to be enjoying this display. Some were even drawn in and soon others were walking around chanting 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. And that's when we arrived, Bob.

And I tell you, I have never seen anything like it. I think the guy was just some kind of hypnotist. When the police arrived, they came towards him and he said he wanted to wrestle like he did with his TA when he was stoned. And that's when one officer approached him slowly saying that everything was going to be okay. To which the man said, it was more than okay.

Everything was enfolded with an expansion and contraction, which arose out of and returned to the source. Then he pointed to a garbage can and insisted he could merge with it. The officer said that he wanted the man to get into the car. And then the man, called the Big Shin, pointed to the car and said he had been in one of those, and that it had rolled over and over and slid under a semi and that was how he lost his ear.

But it wasn't a bad trip. Oh, yes, Bob, he seemed to have both his ears. The officer then asked if there were drugs involved and the Big Shin said, yes, LSD. But then he giggled and confided that no one knew. So the police officer assured him that now he knew and that they needed him to get into the car. The man asked if instead they could go on a motorcycle at 100 miles per hour with no self-driving or pretend it was an ox and ride backwards. And the officer said, no. To which the man pretended to ring a bell and then said, that car is empty. The officer then said that the empty backseat was going to be full in a moment and asked the man if he could see how many fingers he was holding up. The man then approached the officer, looked deeply into his eyes, and in a slow, meaningful

way asked the officer, who is seeing? Whereupon the officer disappeared. Vanished.

I kid you not, Bob. Then the man, the Big Shin, pointed quickly and shouted, gone. Well the entire crowd erupted in applause, assuming this was all part of a magic act.

This had all just been a show and a good one too, Bob, I must say. Well the Big Shin, as we'll now call him, turned to the crowd and told them that he had a book on how to do this, but that it was in R&D; and for now everyone could just apply C, C, and E liberally and they too could return to the source. Then the officer reappeared, but no longer wanted to arrest the man and instead wanted to ask him more about his source. The officer seemed like a different man, Bob, and told us all to have some compassion and to love deeply and act effectively, which, coming from a cop, is quite something to hear. Then the officer and the man conferred, after which the officer bowed to him.

I kid you not, Bob, you simply cannot make this stuff up. And then the Big Shin turned to the crowd and said, and this is a direct quote, On the epitaph of civilization will be that subtle emotional sensations that went undetected did them in. But we could do something about that and feel in with clarity, equanimity, and concentration, noting activity and rest and also vibration. And by having a complete experience of this, we could find true freedom and fulfilling bliss and be patient. It takes time and know that the first bite of emptiness is like biting into an apple.

That's right. The taste and texture of the skin is not what's inside. And no matter how long it takes, it's worth the ride. And all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well. If we appreciate, transcend, and in positivity dwell.

And in the meantime, be a mensch and just think of that inside the jewel in the lotus is love. And on that note, he expanded and contracted until he too disappeared. And the crowd now the audience just stood there. It was weird because we were all quite confused, but also happy and felt good from this strange little man at the edge of the woods. And I realized that I'm now talking in rhyme. And I trust Bob that this too will pass with time. So this is Melanie Mash signing out from this event. It was odd and bizarre, but we all leave content.

## \*5. WORKING with INTENSE EMOTION - GUIDED MEDITATION (2

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Able to get a little sense of that? Oh yeah. So that's a catharsis, a releasing of fear. It creates this kind of center of this, it's kind of a deep joy that kind of comes up the center but then I get really hot. Yeah, let the joy be there, let the heat be there.

These are all reactions to the catharsis. And if the heat produces more fear, then just dissipate that in the fear. Accept that we're going to let go of the fear now and go to the sadness.

And don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out what we're going to do. Same procedure, start with the periphery of the sadness flavor, work with that, see if it's amenable through a zoom out process to an experience of a global flow in the sadness. If that's feasible, do that and then go in and look for the local flow in the epicenter and you're going to get a local global flow in the sadness if indeed that's sort of doable at this time. I'd like you to explore the doability of that with regards to sadness.

Just give it some time. Ever able to get a little hint of that? Yeah, since the sadness doesn't have the same vein network of spread, I just kind of instead of, since I didn't quite have the subtle area, I just went around the boundaries of it. That's exactly correct.

That corresponds to the subtle, it's just less widespread. That was a good move. I just made the boundaries soft and then treated that like... That's right, that's what I would have had you do. So you're able to get a little sense of that. Yeah.

Okay, good. Now, I'm going to have you do a fairly intricate concentration where you're going to attempt to experience simultaneously a kind of river of fear and a kind of river of sad that flow through each other, interpenetrating without interfering. So it's almost like...

Could you say that again? Oh yeah, right. There's the sadness flavor and it's a sort of like giant liquid drop that's sort of expanding and contracting, right? Right. And there's the fear flavor and it's a giant liquid drop doing the same essential dance.

Right. Now, you know how in a ghost movie you see that the ghost can walk through the wall, right? Right. The ghost passes through the wall, the wall gives no resistance. Now imagine you didn't have a ghost and a wall, but you had two ghosts and they were both doing their own thing, but they could pass through each other without disturbing each other when they occupied the same place at the same time. So you're going to have these two ghostly waves, one flavored fear, the other flavored sad, and they're sort of dancing, except unlike physical dancers, parts of them, even all of them can occupy the same place.

So they're constantly waving and the waves pass through each other without disturbing each other, without developing pressure areas where they would clash. Does this metaphor make sense? Yeah. Have you attempted to do this with the fear and sad? Not in this, not this round. This may be the part of the missing piece, because you could get them individually to flow, but then the next step is collectively to flow. Because if they both flow at the same time, interpenetrating wherever they need to without interfering, then they won't multiply together into overwhelm. So the ability to have more than one flavor and to separate the flavors, have all the flavors flow, and then have the flow fields interpenetrate without interference is a sequence that I take people through when they're going through big challenges that are polychromatic body distress, meaning a lot of different colors in the body. Then we need to train the colors to flow through each other. It's an interesting

intimacy between them. It's like they're dancing through each other as well as with each other.

And to the extent that they're both flowing, you'll get an even more powerful flavor of purification and hopefully a significantly deeper sense of relief. Okay, good. How's that coming? Good. Good. Good in what sense? When I can allow them both to share the same space and I'm recognizing how I've been keeping them separate and keeping that line between them, and when I allow them to just kind of do that, the kind of joy I talked about before with the fear, a very intense version of that, and then it kind of seems to ignite this PT-like energy up the body and it gets very hot. So you're getting hot and rapturous with fear and sadness. Yes, I am. This is what most people would say is rather counterintuitive, but your facial expression proves it. Yeah.