

# EMPOWERING (or NOT) DISTINCTIONS & UNIFICATIONS ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 I guess for me the trick would be like, most of the time, the problem is lack of sensory  
00:00:10 clarity, so most of the time the practice is separating.  
00:00:14 But there are those huge windows that open.  
00:00:18 Where the practice is unified.  
00:00:19 Yes.  
00:00:20 And that's the dialectic of this practice.  
00:00:24 It's about, that's one of the balance aspects.  
00:00:29 It's a dynamic balance.  
00:00:33 There's a place, there's a whole list of empowering distinctions.  
00:00:40 There's a whole list of empowering unifications.  
00:00:44 And there's a whole list of disempowering distinctions.  
00:00:48 And there are even disempowering unifications.  
00:00:50 Yeah, that's exactly, I get that, I totally get that.  
00:00:54 If you totally get that, you got a lot.  
00:00:57 You got, your money's worth.  
00:00:59 That's the beauty of it.  
00:01:00 Yeah, what's an example of a disempowering, what are some examples of disempowering unifications?  
00:01:06 Enmeshment.  
00:01:07 Say what?  
00:01:08 Enmeshment.  
00:01:09 Enmeshment.  
00:01:10 I mean, isn't that how we wrote off the book?  
00:01:11 Coda, enmeshment, weak ego structure, what are they, borderline issues.  
00:01:24 And last but not least, identification with the aggressor, Patti Hurst syndrome.  
00:01:32 Codependency.  
00:01:34 Yeah.  
00:01:35 So, there's this whole list of disempowering unifications, but there's also the flip side  
00:01:43 of all of the above is empowering unification.  
00:01:48 And then there's disempowering distinctions, of which the main one is.  
00:01:54 My identity stops with my skin.  
00:01:59 That's the biggest disempowering distinction.  
00:02:05 Distinction between inside and outside.  
00:02:07 And then the distinction between material and spiritual, between form and emptiness.  
00:02:15 Those are all disempowering distinctions.  
00:02:18 So the name of the game is, or the bad news is, that most human beings are involved in  
00:02:28 disempowering distinctions and disempowering unifications.

00:02:33 The good news is that any human being who chooses to can flip it and with a lot of study  
00:02:40 and practice come to understand empowering distinctions and empowering unifications.  
00:02:49 So the focus in technique is interesting, for example.  
00:02:54 I usually present it to you as a deconstructive technique, but it's actually also a restorative  
00:03:02 technique.  
00:03:04 People that have these, sometimes it's called borderline or boundary problem in the sense  
00:03:16 that they can't remember who they are when they're in the presence of the looming other.  
00:03:23 Okay, there's this diagnosis, right?  
00:03:28 And I've had people that had like official psychiatric diagnosis of that weak ego structure  
00:03:38 thing and the description that they gave and the description from the Diagnostic and Statistical  
00:03:44 Manual was, you know, in the presence of other people, the looming other, they just can't  
00:03:52 keep contact with who they are.  
00:03:55 Well guess what?  
00:03:57 The focus in technique will allow you to do that.  
00:04:00 And that's what I used.  
00:04:02 Actually this woman had had a lifelong, big time diagnosis, you know, from a professional  
00:04:10 psychiatrist.  
00:04:11 And what I did is I just had her, I put just a little different spin on the focus in.  
00:04:18 Instead of using it to untangle the I am-ness, I had her use it to keep in contact with the  
00:04:26 fact that she does have an internal life even in the presence of the looming other.  
00:04:33 And it's very tangible.  
00:04:35 And the clarity allowed her to know she had mental image, mental talk, and emotional body  
00:04:40 sensations even when the looming other was present.  
00:04:43 And the looming other was any other human when it started.  
00:04:47 And so that's the sensory clarity.  
00:04:49 What's the concentration piece is to not lose contact with that content in the presence  
00:04:56 of the looming other.  
00:04:57 It's just training.  
00:04:59 Just training.  
00:05:01 So that's now using the focus in, which in some ways could be thought of as breaking  
00:05:08 down the small self.  
00:05:10 But just put a little different spin on it, it's actually empowering the ability to not  
00:05:16 lose yourself when you need to have a distinction between inside and outside.  
00:05:22 So you've probably heard this expression, you have to have an ego before you can let  
00:05:28 go of the ego, et cetera, et cetera.  
00:05:30 Well, I'm not sure that I would exactly formulate it that way, but I would say that there is  
00:05:36 a dialectical process.  
00:05:39 And I drew a picture of it.  
00:05:48 So anyway, you know who first came up with that expression about you have to have an  
00:05:56 ego before you can let go of it?  
00:05:59 That was Jack Engler, who is both a mindfulness teacher and at one time was the head of psychiatry  
00:06:08 at Harvard Medical School, which tells us something about the age in which we're living.

00:06:16 So I told Jack this story about the woman with the whatever, and he actually immediately  
00:06:24 invited me to do grand rounds at Harvard Medical School based on that whole paradigm.  
00:06:31 I ended up, wasn't able to go, but it's just historically interesting.