

# The 'Focus on Positive' Theme ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 Instead of just observing the subjective system of field image talk, we've been intentionally  
00:00:11 finding, creating, holding, and even radiating what I call positive states.  
00:00:21 So sometimes in the process of just observing, it might happen to you that you get a mental  
00:00:30 picture that has a deep positive significance for you.  
00:00:36 It might happen.  
00:00:39 Native people value this very much and actually go through various physical ordeals of fasting  
00:00:45 and other ceremonies in order to get those deep sort of directional images.  
00:00:55 And anthropologists call it a vision quest, although native people just call it fasting.  
00:01:02 If an Indian says, I've been fasting, they probably mean I just spent four days without  
00:01:09 any food or any water alone on a hill crying for a vision.  
00:01:15 So it could happen as you're just in the course of practice that a particularly powerful image  
00:01:25 comes up, or you could intentionally create it.  
00:01:31 So if it comes up spontaneously, you can just note it if you're doing focus in and not treat  
00:01:37 it in any way special.  
00:01:38 Or you can decide, hey, this is significant.  
00:01:41 I'm going to try to hold it, intentionally go with it.  
00:01:45 And that becomes a focus on a positive image.  
00:01:48 Analogously, it could happen just spontaneously that a wisdom word or phrase, something that  
00:01:57 encapsulates a certain good direction, psychologically, behaviorally, or spiritually for you, something  
00:02:07 comes up in the talk space.  
00:02:09 And you might want to just observe it, or you might want to hold on to it.  
00:02:15 So then you could shift to a focus on positive.  
00:02:18 But it's also possible to intentionally create those kinds of words, phrases, and sentences  
00:02:24 if you wish.  
00:02:26 Positive feel is a special case, I would say, of feel in general.  
00:02:38 And it's feel that typically is pleasant, although you can have compassion type feels  
00:02:44 that are sort of sad but in a compassionate way, et cetera.  
00:02:50 Quite how one would classify that, I'm not sure.  
00:02:53 But usually, the positive feels are pleasant.  
00:02:57 They're associated with a positive direction in your behavior or positive aspirations for  
00:03:04 others.  
00:03:05 But I also count positive feel as pleasant sensations associated with being in highly  
00:03:14 concentrated states, pleasant sensations associated with the presence of flow, restful states,  
00:03:24 or just an intrinsic joy for no reason whatsoever.  
00:03:29 Ahe Tukananda in Sanskrit is joy that's just our birthright and doesn't have to have a  
00:03:37 reason.  
00:03:39 This would be a range of things that we could call positive feel.

00:03:43 And they could come up, once again, spontaneously as we're just observing things.

00:03:50 Or we can sort of look for it, create it, attempt to hold it.

00:03:56 And when you look for it, when you decide to hold it, if it's come up spontaneously,

00:04:03 or you intentionally look for it, create it, and then hold it, that's an approach called

00:04:10 focus on positive.

00:04:18 When you have things that fall under the category of positive come up spontaneously, then you

00:04:25 sort of have a choice of whether to deal with the matter of factly, whether to go for a

00:04:32 focus on positive, which is sort of a formal structure where you hold, repeat, and so forth,

00:04:39 or whether to go into just discursive thinking.

00:04:43 And like, okay, I'm going to explore this and think about this in the normal way that

00:04:48 I think about things, because this seems like nature is opening an insight door or some

00:04:55 window, and I would like to pursue it discursively.

00:04:59 So essentially, if something unusually positive comes up visually, auditorially, or somatically

00:05:08 in the subjective domain as you're practicing, I would say you have three choices.

00:05:15 And sorry to give you so many choices, but they're all good.

00:05:20 The basic thing about not being freaked out by choices is to realize all the choices are

00:05:26 good.

00:05:27 You're not going to miss out no matter which one you take.

00:05:31 So one choice is you're just going to deconstruct it.

00:05:36 There's a famous story about the Zen monk is meditating, and the gods are so impressed

00:05:44 by his practice that they come and give flowers every day.

00:05:50 This goes on for a couple weeks, and finally, one day, he just takes out the kesaku and

00:05:58 beats the crap out of all the gods and says, get the hell out of here.

00:06:02 Well, it's a metaphor for being matter of fact no matter what comes up, even if the

00:06:09 gods give you flowers and bathe you and whatever, seemingly, that's just field image talk.

00:06:17 So even if very impactful things come up, you might decide to simply, that's just field

00:06:26 image talk.

00:06:28 That's one decision, and then you would be penetrating them, but in the same way that

00:06:32 you would penetrate any sensory event.

00:06:34 Alternatively, okay, let's go to hold positive.

00:06:38 It's a formal technique.

00:06:40 I'm going to repeat that talk as a mantra.

00:06:42 I'm going to try to maintain that image.

00:06:45 I'm going to try to maintain that field or some combination of those three, a pair or

00:06:51 all three at once.

00:06:53 So then you go to focus on positive.

00:06:55 Third possibility, oh, nature seems to be presenting me with an insight window here.

00:07:03 I need to think about this, and you start thinking.

00:07:07 Notice that I go nowhere without a notepad.

00:07:12 When insights come, I will often go into discursive thought, and I will write things down, et

00:07:21 cetera, et cetera.

00:07:22 Now, I know I'm suspending the formal practice in order to think in the normal way because

00:07:29 I have to think in the normal way to pursue that insight, and it's certainly okay to do

00:07:34 that on occasion.

00:07:36 What we want to avoid is a meditation that is only discursive thought because that's

00:07:43 not really meditation, but it's certainly okay to do that when it seems appropriate.