

Depth & Breadth of Concentration – Part 3 of 3 ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 Another common misconception about concentration is that it will always require a lot of effort.

00:00:14 Now it is true that initially, when you attempt to develop concentration, your attention wanders,

00:00:24 you bring it back, your attention wanders, you bring it back.

00:00:27 This does require a certain amount of effort initially,

00:00:32 but it is not the case that it's always going to require that effort.

00:00:39 A time comes when it's automatic and no longer effortful.

00:00:48 Yes, you have to be willing to invest a certain amount of effort,

00:00:52 and even after it becomes effortless, there may be times when you're facing sensory challenges

00:00:58 when you have to effort again.

00:01:01 But it's not the case that forever and ever and ever it's this huge Herculean or Sisyphean task

00:01:12 that you're undertaking.

00:01:15 You train yourself to be able to maintain profound concentration states while doing it in a very complex or chaotic environment.

00:01:25 And that's the dimension of growth of concentration that I refer to as it broadens, it encompasses more and more of life.

00:01:36 So when I went into that 100-day training, I could sometimes get a little bit of flavor of concentration

00:01:48 through formal sitting, counting the breath, and I could get a little bit of concentration when I would do simple tasks.

00:01:58 I came out 100 days later, and I was not the same person.

00:02:06 I had been fundamentally re-engineered.

00:02:09 It was a very small price to pay.

00:02:11 You might think 100 days is a big price, is like a long time, and that's a big deal.

00:02:17 It's a very small price to pay for a new life.

00:02:23 But essentially after that, that taste of concentration was always present for me 24-7.

00:02:33 Now, of course, as fun as it is to tell these horror stories or war stories about intense training in Asia,

00:02:42 it's also sort of not a good thing to tell people.

00:02:45 Why? Why is this not a good thing to tell you?

00:02:49 Because if that's what you have to go through to get this, I don't think I'm

going to sign up in this lifetime.

00:02:55 It's the natural reaction.

00:02:57 It's like, what, I'm going to have to torture myself with cold water for 100 days if I want to have perennial samadhi?

00:03:06 No, not necessary.

00:03:09 In Buddhism, they have this concept called upaya or skillful means.

00:03:14 You don't have to rely on brute force methods.

00:03:18 You can work smart and get the same results.

00:03:22 And my attempt to formulate the techniques and the concepts of this path in a very precise way

00:03:35 is my attempt to allow ordinary North American, or let's say modern people,

00:03:42 to allow you to get the same results that monastics get without the brute force methods.

00:03:49 So, no, you don't have to go through this kind of thing in order to get comparable results.

00:03:55 You can work smart.

00:03:57 And, yes, you may have to amortize it over a longer period of time.