

# RETROACTIVE MEDITATION ~Shinzen Young

00:00:00 Okay, well, sometimes people ask, okay, when I do intellectual work, I can't meditate,

00:00:11 because I've got to do the intellectual work.

00:00:15 Or is there a way I can meditate, etc.?

00:00:18 I'll just share my experience.

00:00:21 I think different people will have different experiences, but my experience is that when

00:00:26 I do intellectual work, when I do writing, or I'm trying to figure stuff out, I can't

00:00:32 implement any kind of formal technique.

00:00:39 But what I can do is I can pepper that experience with little moments of practice in life.

00:00:49 So what that involves is what I call stop on a dime, okay?

00:00:54 It's like, okay, I'm doing this, I'm doing this, I've been doing this for an hour, and

00:00:59 I really like to keep doing this, but ...

00:01:24 Stop on a dime.

00:01:40 Now what's going to happen?

00:01:42 Well, maybe everything will be peaceful and formless after 50 years of practice.

00:01:51 Just kidding.

00:01:53 But probably there will be a Vesuvius called the eruption of past and future.

00:02:03 And that will erupt in the seeing, hearing, feeling, probably.

00:02:09 So you implement a technique, even if it's only for 30 seconds.

00:02:21 You open up completely to that.

00:02:26 In those 30 seconds, if you bring the totality of your intentionality to do a quality period

00:02:36 of practice with whatever erupts, then you can actually do retroactive meditation.

00:02:47 Now retroactive meditation is by definition oxymoronic, isn't it?

00:02:53 Because it's meditation, mindfulness particularly, is always in the moment, right?

00:02:59 How can you possibly retroactively be mindful?

00:03:03 But you see, while you were bopping around doing this, doing that, doing this, doing

00:03:07 that, all those energies were getting agitated, activated.

00:03:12 When you stop on a dime, you only have a couple minutes.  
00:03:18 But if you really bring your triple A game during those couple minutes, everything that  
00:03:27 got stirred up in that hour or two hours of just ordinary unconscious frenetic activity,  
00:03:34 it's right there in those couple minutes.  
00:03:37 And if you can have a complete experience of that, it effectively has the same effect  
00:03:46 on your overall growth pattern as having meditated for those two hours.  
00:03:53 You do it retroactively, but you have to really bring your A game to whatever got stimulated.  
00:03:58 So when I do things that I just have to do things, where I can't keep a technique going  
00:04:06 during the thing because I'm just doing the thing, then I pepper it with this stop on  
00:04:12 a dime, start on a dime.  
00:04:15 So stop on a dime is you stop the activity, no matter how much you want to keep doing  
00:04:20 it, okay?  
00:04:21 The mindfulness bell rang, I remember, okay, got to pepper the day, stop on a dime, and  
00:04:26 then you start on a dime.  
00:04:28 Feel in, gone.  
00:04:30 See out.  
00:04:31 See out.  
00:04:32 Feel in, gone.  
00:04:33 See out.  
00:04:34 Feel in, gone.  
00:04:35 See rest.  
00:04:37 See rest.  
00:04:39 See in, gone.  
00:04:42 No hesitation.  
00:04:44 Not, oh, I got to sit here for 15 minutes and focus on my breath and then I can note  
00:04:51 what's going on.  
00:04:52 No.  
00:04:53 See out, gone.  
00:04:54 See out, gone.  
00:04:55 Feel in, gone.  
00:04:57 Okay?  
00:04:58 Just start on a dime.  
00:05:00 No hesitation.

00:05:02 Because as, who was that that said that?

00:05:11 Can't remember right now.

00:05:21 It'll come, Victor Frankel.

00:05:24 Victor Frankel said, between the stimulus and the response, there is a gap.

00:05:34 Therein lies your freedom.

00:05:37 In daily life, stuff comes up and about three seconds later, a reaction occurs from you.

00:05:52 The degree to which there is mindfulness in that three seconds or two seconds, therein

00:06:01 is measured your freedom.

00:06:04 So we want to be able to implement these techniques instantly.

00:06:12 Because in daily life, two or three seconds, if you're not Johnny on the spot with mindfulness,

00:06:22 the terrorists are in the cockpit.

00:06:26 You follow my metaphor?

00:06:29 Okay.

00:06:30 The lizard brain is going to run the show.

00:06:35 And then you look back and it's like, why did I do that?

00:06:38 When I could have done this other thing.

00:06:41 So if you have to do actions where you just have to do the action and you can't keep a

00:06:48 technique going, that's okay.

00:06:51 But then pepper it.

00:06:53 Stop on a dime.

00:06:55 Stop the action.

00:06:57 Occasionally start on a dime.

00:07:00 Just bring your AAA game, even if it's only for two minutes, to whatever got stirred up.

00:07:07 I don't know what your experience will be, but my experience is that the forces of past

00:07:17 and future are what I have to face when I stop on a dime.

00:07:23 It's like there's this tidal force that says, look back at what just happened.

00:07:32 Look forward as to what needs to happen next.

00:07:36 So there's this powerful pull of past and future.

00:07:42 Time before and time after.

00:07:46 T.S. Eliot has a whole poem about this.

00:07:51 Maybe I'll read it next time.

00:07:54 Lamenting how everyone lives in time before and time after.

00:08:00 Almost everyone.

00:08:02 Very few people live in the present.