

THE QUICKEST WAY TO ENLIGHTENMENT ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 Sometimes people ask me, is there a really quick way to enlightenment?

00:00:10 There's got to be a quicker way.

00:00:11 A lot of you know what's coming because this is a standard story that I tell, which is,

00:00:20 well, are you sure you want to know?

00:00:26 Maybe you won't like what you hear.

00:00:29 Yeah, I can tell you some pretty quick ways to transform deeply.

00:00:41 Strong determination sitting.

00:00:44 It's a classic.

00:00:46 I won't say that every master has done it, but I would say that the great majority of

00:00:54 people that come to the master level on this path have done a lot of strong determination

00:01:03 sitting.

00:01:04 So, what does that mean?

00:01:06 That means that you sit down and you say, okay, for the next hour or the next 90 minutes

00:01:15 or two hours or three or four or whatever, three days, not going to voluntarily move.

00:01:25 So I know the prospect of something like that seems horrific.

00:01:31 You might not imagine yourself doing that.

00:01:36 Well, first of all, I said it could just be an hour or 90 minutes, okay?

00:01:42 It doesn't have to be three days.

00:01:47 Secondly, even if it was four hours or eight hours, this is not so extravagantly unrelated

00:02:06 to experiences that normal human beings have.

00:02:10 In fact, I would suggest to you that at least half of all human beings that ever lived have

00:02:23 been through an experience comparable in intensity.

00:02:28 Do you get what I'm talking about?

00:02:37 Sitting for eight hours and breaking through a posture is not more intense than giving

00:02:44 birth to a baby.

00:02:45 If you've done that, okay.

00:02:46 Now, of course, it's a different circumstance.

00:02:49 So, I mean, first of all, there's no way out.

00:02:55 Secondly, there's a lot to distract and yes, nowadays there are medications and so forth.

00:03:02 But the way most people had to give birth to babies for most of humanity's history,

00:03:10 I think it was nature's way to bring that person to a permanent transcendence.

00:03:20 Sort of makes sense, right?

00:03:22 You're doing the activity of the source, expanding and contracting.

00:03:28 It's interesting.

00:03:30 I talked about the Sundance yesterday, native people.

00:03:35 So the story that's told among the Lakota Sioux is that originally Sundancing was for

00:03:44 men only.

00:03:45 Nowadays, it's women, even children, actually.

00:03:54 The men wanted to know what it was like to give birth.

00:04:00 So if you look at the symbolism of the Sundance, the men wear skirts like women and you're

00:04:11 attached by a tether, pierced, which is symbolic of the umbilical cord.

00:04:20 And then you have to break loose and that's like being born, et cetera, like a new birth.

00:04:29 Actually, in the old days, after their fourth year of Sundancing, they considered that they

00:04:36 had died and were a completely new person and they actually gave away all their possessions,

00:04:45 like everything.

00:04:47 All their teepees and ponies and everything and they just started from scratch as a new

00:04:56 person.

00:04:57 Okay, so even though it sort of sounds like really far out there, it's actually no more

00:05:04 than what at least half of humans do.

00:05:11 But the good news is strong determination sitting, you can gradually work up to.

00:05:16 You train yourself slowly to be able to do this kind of thing.

00:05:21 So there's one absolute rule.

00:05:30 Do not, do not, do not physically damage the body.

00:05:36 So how are you going to know if you're physically damaging the body?

00:05:40 Well remember you gradually train yourself to do this, right?

00:05:44 It's a slow training.

00:05:45 So you sit for an hour, you got some pain, you get up, it goes away, you're okay, you

00:05:52 haven't damaged the body.

00:05:54 Then you add five minutes, five minutes, five minutes, and as long as you're getting up

00:06:00 and after a few minutes you're okay, then you're okay.

00:06:05 I can assure you that with rare exceptions, most people can sit down for four hours and

00:06:13 not move and get up and they haven't like damaged any joints or anything like that.

00:06:18 But you gradually sort of learn how to do this.

00:06:22 Oh by the way, your legs falling asleep isn't going to damage anything.

00:06:28 And it's not, you're not cutting off circulation so much, it's more pressure on nerves that

00:06:35 causes that paresthesia thing and that, as you notice, disappears as soon as you get

00:06:43 up.

00:06:44 There might occasionally be exceptions where people have neurological or circulatory issues.

00:06:50 So if you wonder about that, check it with a doctor.

00:06:55 Usually it's not that big a deal.

00:06:59 The main danger in your legs falling asleep is not massive necrosis that you might be

00:07:07 fantasizing, the tissues are dying.

00:07:10 The main danger is if you try to get up too quickly, your legs will not hold you and you

00:07:17 fall.

00:07:18 I've seen some really far out, you know, people that didn't know that, like in Zen, like the

00:07:25 clackers go, you know, and it's like, okay, everybody jumps up and they just like do a

00:07:31 somersault across the Zen dome, you know.

00:07:35 So yeah, you have to get up slowly.

00:07:38 So what's involved in a strong determination sitting?

00:07:44 Well, you're going to have four things arise.

00:07:50 You're going to have physical sensations and those are going to get more and more and more

00:07:57 intense for sure.

00:08:00 And then you're going to have your thoughts and emotions and your will and your desire

00:08:06 and your judgments arising moment by moment reactively to that.

00:08:12 So that's a pretty big object.

00:08:14 That's the whole mind-body-self.

00:08:16 That's why if you can have a complete experience of that, it's a powerful transcendence.

00:08:24 And that's why, as I say, not everyone that becomes a master, but in Asian style training,
00:08:33 an awful lot of people that become masters, they do this.
00:08:42 So what's going to happen?
00:08:44 You start to get physical discomfort.
00:08:48 Now what I usually do, this is my own personal strategy.
00:08:54 You'll find whatever strategy works for you if you decide to do things like this.
00:09:00 But my personal strategy is to start by detecting the global spread of the pain rather than
00:09:09 going immediately to the local intensity.
00:09:14 That's sort of the sensory clarity skill.
00:09:21 After you get really intimate with the body, you realize that the body is like a pond and
00:09:28 not always, but quite often when there's a local physical or emotional splash, there's
00:09:35 a global ripple.
00:09:39 And one of the options within the noting apparatus is what I call zooming.
00:09:47 You can zoom in, you can zoom out, you can zoom both ways.
00:09:51 So zooming both ways means that you thrust your attention into the local splash, so that's
00:09:58 contracted, but at the same time you spread your attention over the whole body.
00:10:04 So you sort of zoom in and out at the same time.
00:10:07 Now what that does is that greases the rails, so to speak, for sensations to dissipate in
00:10:20 the volume of the body.
00:10:21 It's analogous to Boyle's law in physical chemistry.
00:10:27 Pressure is inversely proportional to volume if pressure is analogous to suffering.
00:10:36 So here's how that works.
00:10:38 So when you zoom into a local intensity, of course that becomes very salient.
00:10:45 It intensifies even more.
00:10:48 But at the same time you're zooming out.
00:10:51 Now one of two things will happen.
00:10:54 Either there will be conscious sensations that are spreading from that local intensity
00:11:01 and with the zooming out you'll be able to detect that and open up to it and facilitate
00:11:08 that.
00:11:10 The other possibility is that actually there aren't conscious spreading

sensations.

00:11:16 And that's fine.

00:11:17 It's not always the case that there are conscious spreading sensations.

00:11:22 But it is almost always the case, with rare exception, that there are subconscious spreading

00:11:31 sensations going on.

00:11:33 Now an important principle in mindfulness is we only ask you to attend to what is available

00:11:39 in conscious experience.

00:11:45 So don't worry if you don't detect any of that subliminal spread.

00:11:49 But here's the subtlety of the technique, the sort of cleverness of the option.

00:11:57 If you spread your awareness over the whole body, zoom out while you zoom in, then even

00:12:06 if there's not a conscious awareness of the spread of the sensation, the movement of your

00:12:14 attention over the whole body greases the rails for the subconscious processing to spread

00:12:25 without impedance.

00:12:27 You may not consciously be aware, but you're giving the very subtle spreading tendencies

00:12:36 of the body what they need to dissipate the density of things.

00:12:42 So that's one possible strategy for doing it.

00:12:49 So anyway, I tend to sort of try to get the local splash and the global ripple.

00:12:58 And then at some point, I start to freak out.

00:13:04 So where does the freak out come?

00:13:06 Well, the freak out is in the subjective system.

00:13:11 I start to go, oh my God, oh my God, no, no, okay.

00:13:16 And I start to get disconcerting images of being stabbed and burned and what have you.

00:13:27 And then the emotions start to come up in the body.

00:13:31 There's a subtle hint of teariness.

00:13:36 In here, there's a kind of cold fear thing that sort of pervades the body.

00:13:47 Subtle, but subtle is significant.

00:13:52 Those see in, hear in, feel in reactions are natural.

00:13:59 If you contract them and unblock them, they won't be a problem.

00:14:06 If you can't, then they're going to cross multiply with the physical sensations.

00:14:13 And so instead of see in plus hear in plus feel in plus feel out, you're going to get

00:14:22 see in times hear in times feel in times feel out.

00:14:27 That's why if you've ever noticed, it's like, I can handle it, I can handle it, I can handle

00:14:32 it.

00:14:33 And you're like, oh, I can't handle it, okay.

00:14:36 It's not linear, right?

00:14:38 It's not like it grows like this, it grows like this.

00:14:43 That's because things are starting to cross multiply.

00:14:49 But if you have enough clarity to separate out the strands so that they don't, they don't

00:14:59 tangle and reinforce each other, then actually it just grows linearly.

00:15:05 And yes, it gets more and more and more, but you don't get this sort of like snowballing

00:15:13 overwhelm thing.

00:15:15 It just grows, grows, grows, grows, grows, grows, grows, grows, grows, grows, and then

00:15:21 something happens.

00:15:22 And then grows, grows, grows, grows, grows, grows, grows.

00:15:27 And then it just flows, flows, flows, flows.

00:15:31 And then, yeah, you go through another cycle and it's a little more.

00:15:36 And then it flows, flows, flows, flows.

00:15:39 The whole mind-body process.

00:15:45 It's scary because the ordinary ordering principle is completely unavailable.

00:15:53 The ordinary ordering principle for the body is get comfortable.

00:15:57 The ordinary ordering principle for the mind is get answers.

00:16:02 And you can't do either.

00:16:05 Those are just not available.

00:16:06 The mind can't process.

00:16:08 In fact, your eyes are sort of rolling in your head and you're right on the verge of

00:16:15 passing out.

00:16:19 But you've got a smile on your face because you're moment by moment tasting purification.

00:16:31 And so you're getting an immediate reward.

00:16:38 Once again, this may sound radical, but half the people in this room have done this.

00:16:45 I remember back if you had kids.

00:16:51 So it's just a matter of doing it in a really systematic way.

00:17:03 So that's a really big object, the whole mind-body self.

00:17:11 But if we appreciate it to the extreme, just as it is, then at some point it becomes flowing

00:17:22 space.

00:17:23 Gradually, gradually, gradually you work your way up to this.

00:17:28 It's not, it's a homework assignment.

00:17:30 You've got the rest of your life to turn in.

00:17:37 And you don't have to do it if you don't want to.

00:17:39 You can just follow the path of bliss, the jhanas, the absorptions, what have you.

00:17:44 That works too.