

# Mindfulness Strategies when Interacting with Others ~ SHINZEN YOUNG

00:00:00 Now, on retreats, we normally are keeping silence.

00:00:16 But I got a note about in daily life when we're talking to people, how can we formulate

00:00:29 strategies for meditating or for doing a practice when talking to people?

00:00:37 Well, sometimes when you're talking to someone, it's a substantive conversation.

00:00:45 So you really need like 100% of your CPU to be carrying on that.

00:00:52 So in those cases, you just have to accept the fact that you can't actually implement

00:00:58 a, or you, no, I don't want to put it that way, you may not be able to implement an intentional

00:01:07 strategy because you have to just be paying attention to what's going on.

00:01:12 However, there is a gradation in our conversations with people with regards to how substantive

00:01:23 the conversations are.

00:01:26 A lot of conversations that we have with people are not, do not require our total CPU, if

00:01:34 you follow my metaphor, to be engaged with that person.

00:01:39 So we get an interesting figure ground reversal here.

00:01:45 Normally good conversations are ones that are substantive.

00:01:49 And just listening to somebody blabber or shoot the breeze with vacuous social

00:02:06 clichés or what have you, those are considered like not great conversations.

00:02:12 But here's where the figure ground reversal comes in.

00:02:16 Those now become the great conversations.

00:02:19 You understand why?

00:02:22 Because you've got some wiggle room, you've got some extra energy that you can use to

00:02:32 implement a formal strategy.

00:02:37 So you can just listen to people talk and talk and talk and talk and talk and talk and

00:02:46 talk, okay?

00:02:47 And it's great, the more they talk and the less you talk, the easier it is to continue

00:02:54 implementing your technique.

00:02:57 So it gives you a completely different way of thinking about interactions.

00:03:02 So then you train yourself.

00:03:05 You are responding to them, you're not spacing out, but you're training a variety of possible

00:03:16 focus strategies.

00:03:17 So what are some of the things that you could train under these circumstances?

00:03:23 Well one thing is you can use part of the focus out thing.

00:03:32 You can anchor yourself in the sights and sounds of that person.

00:03:38 You're really listening and you're really looking.

00:03:43 That's one strategy.

00:03:45 Another strategy is meta in the body.

00:03:51 You sort of, you know, we look at people, we smile, it's sort of a social convention,

00:03:58 but you can use Samadhi to inflate that social smile into a real like whole body experience

00:04:08 of unconditional love just pouring out of your pores.

00:04:16 It can be trained and it's very, very powerful once you learn how to do this.

00:04:22 So one of my most common strategies for meditating in conversations is, okay, the sights and

00:04:33 sounds of the person or the loving kindness kind of thing.

00:04:39 Other strategies are possible.

00:04:41 The important thing is you sort of pick your battles.

00:04:46 You say, okay, guess what?

00:04:48 In this conversation, I got enough wiggle room that I can respond appropriately and

00:04:55 be implementing this technique.

00:05:00 So people often worry though, well, if I'm implementing a formal technique while having

00:05:06 a conversation with someone, number one, people have two worries.

00:05:14 First it's like, well, I'll get so involved in the technique that I won't be able to

00:05:19 be appropriate.

00:05:20 That's the worry number one.

00:05:23 Worry number two is I'm going to look weird or they're going to see that I'm like secretly

00:05:28 doing this, whatever.

00:05:31 Okay, so let's address the first concern.

00:05:37 Like the proverbial, you know, pat your head and rub your belly.

00:05:42 Or is it, yeah, I guess it's that way.

00:05:47 That's really hard.

00:05:50 Okay, whatever.

00:05:56 So you might be a little awkward initially, but people usually don't notice.  
00:06:07 And then you gain some facility to it.  
00:06:10 You can keep the technique going and, you know, respond and you don't feel awkward at  
00:06:16 all.  
00:06:17 So yeah, you might need to be willing to feel a little bit awkward initially because you're  
00:06:23 not using the ordinary strategy that we use when we're having conversations with people.  
00:06:30 The ordinary strategy that we use when we have conversations with people is we're constantly  
00:06:36 going into our see-in, hear-in, feel-in system to plan what we're going to say next.  
00:06:45 Constantly being pulled back into the subjective world.  
00:06:48 Now you're starting to, I mean, of course that could be a technique.  
00:06:52 You could be observing your see-in, hear-in, feel-in reactions to that person.  
00:06:57 However, in that case, you're observing them.  
00:06:59 You're not actually buying into them or using them to plan what you're going to say next.  
00:07:06 So, that's where the little awkwardness may come in for a little while because it's like  
00:07:13 whatever strategy you're doing, even if it's observing your reactions, certainly if it's  
00:07:18 a focus out or a radiate love from your body thing, you're not constantly now going back  
00:07:26 to see-in, hear-in, feel-in to figure out what you're going to say next.  
00:07:32 And if you pay close attention, you'll see that's what we constantly do.  
00:07:37 So you might feel a little bit awkward, yes, initially.  
00:07:45 But then you learn that you actually don't need to constantly go to that place in order  
00:07:51 to be appropriate.  
00:07:56 So that takes care of concern number one.  
00:07:59 Concern number two, well, they'll know that you're like doing a technique.  
00:08:03 Well, guess what?  
00:08:05 Your technique is not to disengage from them.  
00:08:10 You are anchoring in their sights and sounds or you are radiating in all directions, including  
00:08:17 their direction, unconditional positive regard.  
00:08:21 So in fact, you're more engaged with them.  
00:08:24 In fact, what disengages people is that constant pulling towards your own mind and emotions

00:08:32 that's reactive or planning and so forth.

00:08:35 So if that doesn't happen, then actually people feel that you're like really giving them attention.

00:08:45 You're giving them time and space and people find that very attractive.

00:08:53 The less something you have inside yourself as you're interacting with a person, that

00:09:05 sort of emptiness is like a magnet.

00:09:11 That person, unless they're an experienced practitioner, has a constant pressure of seeing,

00:09:17 hearing, and feeling.

00:09:19 You're now learning how to communicate with that person without having within yourself

00:09:24 that constant pressure of seeing, hearing, and feeling.

00:09:28 That creates, in a good sense, a vacuum inside you.

00:09:33 So it's like an osmotic gradient or a pressure gradient.

00:09:37 The ego pressure that they have can dissipate in the space of your ego absence.

00:09:45 And that creates a force that attracts people towards you, a kind of magnetic force.

00:09:53 They don't know why, but they're pulled by that pressure gradient, if my metaphor makes

00:10:01 any sense at all.

00:10:02 So be willing to take a chance and start flapping your lips without planning what you're saying.

00:10:12 And as you get better and better and better at that, you will eventually learn how to

00:10:17 ride the ox backwards.

00:10:19 That's a Zen metaphor.

00:10:21 The flow of expansion and contraction itself will begin to move your lips and tongue for

00:10:29 you.

00:10:30 And you'll discover that magically powerful and appropriate things are moving across your

00:10:41 teeth without you actually quite even knowing until it's too late.

00:10:49 But then it's like the magic happened.

00:10:52 It takes a long time to train the ability to do that.

00:10:57 And you have to be willing to somewhat throw caution to the wind and just, as I say, start

00:11:03 manifesting.

00:11:04 A lot of times people work against themselves in meditation practice because they go into

00:11:11 like some really deep state and then the bell rings and it's like, oh, I got

to reconstitute

00:11:18 myself in order to be able to deal with the world.

00:11:22 Well, that's like wasting what you just did.

00:11:28 Okay.

00:11:29 It's like, no, the whole idea is you're in this really deep state, you're sort of spacious

00:11:37 and disoriented.

00:11:40 The bell rings, time to deal with the world.

00:11:45 Just continue to be spacious and disoriented and start moving.

00:11:50 And yeah, there might be a little awkwardness initially, but you'll discover that all that

00:11:58 is needed is the activity of the personality.

00:12:02 The somethingness of the ego is not really necessary to navigate the world and to interact

00:12:14 with one's fellow beings.

00:12:16 So the whole idea is it's like the bell rings and no, don't like, okay, I got to get myself

00:12:21 in the world solid again.

00:12:24 No, no, no.

00:12:27 You just start being space, moving through space and let the manifestation occur.