

Growth and Tastes of Concentration, Sensory Clarity and Equanimity ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 Each of those three components grows on average over time.

00:00:20 At a specific time, you could have a certain critical mass of concentration, clarity, and

00:00:39 equanimity with regards to a specific experience.

00:00:44 And then that experience would become paradoxical.

00:00:47 It would be so fully present that it was absent.

00:00:52 But it might be a fairly small experience, and that might happen only sporadically.

00:01:00 On some days, on some occasions, certain experiences, you get the sense of, as it arose, it completed.

00:01:09 So it never constellated into a thing.

00:01:13 And when you look back and ask yourself, why did that happen, well, there was an extraordinary

00:01:18 degree of concentration, clarity, and equanimity for those few seconds or for those few minutes

00:01:25 with regards to this phenomenon.

00:01:27 Typically, that occurs initially with regards to pain in the sit that, quote, breaks up.

00:01:36 It's sort of still there, but it's not really there.

00:01:40 That kind of thing is what I meant by critical mass.

00:01:50 Looked in the large picture, though, over months, years, decades of practice, there

00:01:58 is a sort of hockey stick growth curve for all three of these elements.

00:02:06 However, that growth curve has local fluctuations of peaks and valleys.

00:02:12 Some days, your mindfulness factors are more evident.

00:02:19 Other days, they're less in the small picture, but then there's the large picture.

00:02:24 With regards to how you taste each of these, that's a very good question.

00:02:35 Concentration has its own taste.

00:02:37 It's impossible to describe in words, but once you experience it, you know what it tastes

00:02:44 like.

00:02:45 It's the in-the-zone taste.

00:02:47 But how do you describe that taste to someone?

00:02:51 It's been fairly credibly scientifically documented that the taste of concentration in and of

00:03:00 itself is sensorially fulfilling.

00:03:04 This comes out of the positive psychology work that was done in Chicago by Mike Chixet

00:03:12 Mihaly and others.

00:03:15 It has its taste, and you can taste it.

00:03:23 Equanimity has its taste, but it's impossible to really describe in words.

00:03:29 You develop a taste for it.

00:03:32 If I had to put it into words, but this doesn't really do it, but it's a knowing that because

00:03:40 of the open way that you're experiencing this moment, every moment of your future will be

00:03:46 more fulfilling, involve less suffering, and you're also releasing stuff from the past.

00:03:52 Some part of you knows that as it equanimizes some present sensory phenomenon.

00:03:59 That's the taste of equanimity.

00:04:05 So what's the taste of sensory?

00:04:09 Clarity.

00:04:13 One is untangling.

00:04:18 You say work with feel-image-talk, individually, collectively, and there comes a time when

00:04:25 you get a big fit storm.

00:04:29 A big storm of it arises, and because you have so much momentum of clarity, those elements

00:04:36 don't get mixed.

00:04:39 All three are happening simultaneously, but they're intrinsically untangled in the arising,

00:04:47 and that's one of the tastes of clarity.

00:04:51 It's an unmixing flavor.

00:04:54 I don't know how else to describe it.

00:04:56 It's a de-conflating, which then removes the flooding effect that people get when many

00:05:07 sensory phenomena are activated simultaneously.

00:05:10 They're all still activated at once, but somehow they're not tangling with each other.

00:05:19 When that reaches a critical mass, self as thing goes away.

00:05:24 It just evaporates.

00:05:27 So if you have not a flat screen, but a conventional TV monitor that's a CRT tube, so you look

00:05:38 at it, and let's say that it's showing a white pattern, and I make the claim there's no white

00:05:44 on the screen.

00:05:45 That's an illusion.
00:05:47 You say, are you crazy?
00:05:49 Just look, there's white.
00:05:51 Anybody can see.
00:05:52 I say, oh yeah, there's a magnifying glass.
00:05:54 We agree this does nothing but resolve.
00:05:56 It makes clearer things that are falling together and tangled.
00:06:02 It untangles visual experience.
00:06:06 So at some point, the perception white goes away, and the perception red, green, blue
00:06:12 arises.
00:06:15 Was there ever any white there?
00:06:17 That's sensory clarity.
00:06:19 It's resolution power.
00:06:20 It's high res.
00:06:22 Higher and higher def.
00:06:28 The other direction that the sensory clarity goes is the ability to pick up fainter and
00:06:33 fainter signals, which is a power thing.
00:06:39 If you have signals that are very low power, very subtle, there's a dimension of clarity
00:06:49 regarding the ability to detect those.
00:06:52 My favorite shibboleth, subtle is significant.
00:06:57 So the flavors of sensation that drive day-to-day perceptions and behaviors of human beings,
00:07:09 most of them are initially below the threshold of awareness.
00:07:13 With practice, they percolate up to specificity.
00:07:18 So you're able to detect finer and finer arisings, meaning that you're less and less likely to
00:07:24 be hijacked by subliminal images, talk, and especially by subliminal feel.
00:07:31 In other words, subliminal phenomena, very faint arisings, have a huge impact on the
00:07:41 subconscious without the conscious knowing.
00:07:44 This is one of the main differences between the way that the subconscious is considered
00:07:53 in Western psychology and the way it's considered in Eastern psychology.
00:07:59 In Eastern psychology, there's a lot to it, but one of the dimensions that differs is
00:08:05 you're interested in making the real-time subconscious events that are sensory subconscious
00:08:15 events, specific emotional flavors, mental images, talk that's very faint and very subtle

00:08:25 that's arising in the background.

00:08:28 That becomes perceptible through developing sensory clarity, so you're not hijacked by

00:08:36 it during the day.

00:08:42 There's a third dimension, which is speed of detection.

00:08:49 Sight, sight, feel, all-round, all-round, sight, feel.

00:09:07 You notice that I could start on a dime, sight, feel, feel.

00:09:16 There's no like, okay, I need five minutes to be with my breath and then I can figure

00:09:22 out what's going on.

00:09:24 No, no, emphatically no.

00:09:28 Feel.

00:09:29 Okay, feel.

00:09:32 You've got to be able to do it instantly, right in the thrust of any activity, start

00:09:40 on a dime.

00:09:43 It's the ability to also immediately detect.

00:09:47 Not have to like, okay, the typical, well, I'll sit for 10 minutes and then I can figure

00:09:53 out what the hell's going on inside of me.

00:09:56 No.

00:09:57 Okay, it's got to be all rest, touch, any time, any place, one half of a, quarter of

00:10:10 a second, you're off and running.

00:10:13 Why?

00:10:14 Because in a half a second, the terrorists are in the cockpit.

00:10:21 So maybe the speed of detection is another clarity.

00:10:27 I'm thinking as I'm sort of obviously making it up as I'm going.

00:10:32 So the resolution piece, the ability to detect subtle things and the ability to immediately

00:10:44 be mindful without having to sort of get grounded or whatever people do.

00:10:50 Maybe those are the three dimensions of growth and the clarity.