

A Mindful Birth and Zen Parenting, Part 1 of 2 ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 Now I seem to remember last time we talked you were talking about a baby possibly.

00:00:11 Do you have any questions about mindful giving birth?

00:00:17 Absolutely, yes.

00:00:20 Could you talk about giving birth in particular?

00:00:27 Well, you know how to work in feel space.

00:00:30 You know how to work with uncomfortable touches.

00:00:33 You've done it with your migraines.

00:00:35 You know how to work with challenging emotions.

00:00:38 Well, that's all that's going to come up, right?

00:00:40 You've already done it.

00:00:42 You know that things tend to break up into flow.

00:00:45 That will be even more evident in the birthing process, probably.

00:00:54 What I mean by probably is there's a statistical tendency for anyone,

00:01:02 even someone that hasn't done practices and whatever,

00:01:05 there's a force in nature that pushes mothers into the experience of flow when they give birth.

00:01:16 But they may or may not be able to detect how nature is sort of moving them in that direction.

00:01:24 But it's highly probable that you will be able to detect that, given your background.

00:01:30 There will be these challenges, and you'll apply the procedures that you're familiar with.

00:01:36 In addition to the fact that it's extremely challenging,

00:01:40 you've also got all these forces of nature that are sort of trying to help you out, right?

00:01:45 Women have been doing this since the beginning.

00:01:50 So the body is designed to go into equanimity and flow states during the birthing process.

00:01:57 As I say, due to various circumstances, in modern civilization,

00:02:04 people don't know how to detect that natural tendency, so they may not exactly go with it.

00:02:10 But you will. You've got the challenge level growing.

00:02:14 But then you've got what your body naturally knows, your consciousness actually naturally knows to do,

00:02:22 which is to drop into equanimity and flow.

00:02:26 So those are going to race a little bit, and they do in anybody.

00:02:31 But because you have a practice, that gives a huge advantage to the forces of nature

00:02:40 that are trying to make it into a good experience.

00:02:44 So it's likely that the equanimity and flow will be able to keep well ahead of the rising challenge level.

00:02:52 Likely. Okay?

00:02:54 The contractions start. At first they're mild and they're spaced.

00:02:59 And then they get more intense and closer together.

00:03:03 You understand what I'm saying, right?

00:03:05 And that sort of builds to a point where they're extremely intense and very close together.

00:03:12 Nature is trying to create a rhythm and get you into a rhythm.

00:03:20 And it starts out very gentle and mild and without too much challenge level.

00:03:28 And you can get in sync with that rhythm from the get-go. By the time it reaches full-blown intensity,

00:03:36 you'll have become the cosmic womb of space itself giving birth.

00:03:45 There's a peak and there's a valley. There's a peak and there's a valley.

00:03:48 Pain where the change is subtle takes a lot of work to dissolve.

00:03:53 Pain that comes in well-defined peaks and valleys is much easier to deal with

00:04:00 because you can get into a rhythm with it.

00:04:03 And pain that starts out hardly pain at all and with long intervals,

00:04:10 but then it's going to eventually get to maximum possible.

00:04:14 I've been told it reaches the maximum the nervous system can produce.

00:04:19 Yet women do this, okay?

00:04:22 So that means that the potential for transcendence,

00:04:25 for permanent transformation of consciousness is just incredible.

00:04:30 But you see how nature is trying to make it easy on you.

00:04:34 It's like it's mild and spaced.

00:04:37 So you get into this rhythm with it.

00:04:40 And there are various ways that you can get into the rhythm, which I'll describe in specific.

00:04:45 And then when you finally sort of reach the periods of intensity,

00:04:50 there's a high probability that you'll be in an ecstatic state.

00:04:55 So what happens when a discomfort intensifies?

00:05:00 Well, it may spread.

00:05:04 When a touch expands, there is a tendency for the mind to contract and to turn off.

00:05:18 Except if the mind freaks out.

00:05:21 If the mind freaks out, then as the pain expands, the mental reaction expands.

00:05:28 If you sort of look at what the natural tendency is,

00:05:31 it's simultaneous expansion and contraction of the body,

00:05:35 the physical sensations, the touch expands,

00:05:38 and there's a natural tendency for the image and talk to sort of go into blank and quiet at that time.

00:05:47 That's a tendency.

00:05:48 Now if you can notice that tendency, then each time there's a peak.

00:05:54 So you let the pain expand, and you simultaneously let the mind contract.

00:06:01 And so that peak drives you into blank and quiet in mind space.

00:06:06 And then you let the sensation expand.

00:06:09 But since there's no mind, or little mind, there's little sense of the self.

00:06:16 It would be like literally becoming a flow.

00:06:19 If you can start that rhythm off fairly quickly,

00:06:23 by the time things are getting intense and coming fast and furious,

00:06:27 each expansion of sensation, like the body expands more, but the mind contracts and arrests more.

00:06:37 So each spike of contraction drives the mind into a restful state.

00:06:43 Now, there are also valleys in between the peaks.

00:06:48 What's the natural thing during the valley is to physically relax the body.

00:06:54 Because now the pressure's off.

00:06:56 When the valley comes, you go into relaxation, which is totally natural,

00:07:00 because the pain's not there, right?

00:07:02 So then you relax.

00:07:04 And then when the peak comes, you let the peak drive you into blank and quiet.

00:07:09 And then during the valley, you go deeper into relax.

00:07:13 And then in the peak, you're in blank, quiet.

00:07:16 There is a tendency to, when touch expands, sometimes emotion can react to it,

00:07:23 but sometimes feel gets turned off too.

00:07:27 And that could be a natural tendency.

00:07:29 Feel arising by way of reaction, like fear that can happen.

00:07:32 But you can also see that it will sometimes turn off feel and produce emotional peace.

00:07:37 It's just like only so much real estate in the body.

00:07:40 And if touch is big enough, there's no room for feel anymore, no room for emotion in the body.

00:07:47 The cycle is touch expands, feel, image, talk, self.

00:07:52 Thought and emotion, self, contracts at the same time.

00:07:57 So you're aware of peace, blank, quiet at the peak,

00:08:02 and then you're aware of physical relaxation in the valley.

00:08:05 Then you get into a rhythm with it, and the body is now being controlled by that rhythm.

00:08:12 At the peak, the feeling, thinking self is just gone.

00:08:19 It's just in peace, blank, quiet.

00:08:22 And at the valley, it's easy to physically relax the body.

00:08:27 The cycle takes you into a state of relaxation, peace, blank, quiet.

00:08:33 You may have trouble focusing your eyes and ears at some point,

00:08:37 like you're going to pass out and your eyes start to swim.

00:08:41 That creates light and silence.

00:08:44 So the whole thing is just driving you into restful states,

00:08:49 and then the restful states flow.

00:08:51 And then your expansion and contraction and the universe's expansion and contraction

00:08:57 become a single expansion and contraction.

00:09:00 And God gives birth to the baby through you, so to speak.

00:09:07 And you experience that directly.

00:09:13 Wow. That's beautiful, yes.

00:09:16 That's how I coach women through the birthing process.

00:09:21 Wow. Wow.

00:09:23 Or one of the strategies.

00:09:25 If that doesn't work, there are other strategies.

00:09:30 The flow of having a baby.

00:09:33 Wow. Oh, that's beautiful.