

A Mindfulness Path Arising Between Empowering Contrasts ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 I'd like to think the way that I present mindfulness is based on significant distinctions, or perhaps
00:00:22 a better way to put it, significant contrasts, empowering contrasts.
00:00:31 Viva la difference.
00:00:34 Between what?
00:00:35 Well, a whole bunch of things.
00:00:40 There's a place on this path for making discriminations.
00:00:48 There's a place on this path for destroying discriminations.
00:00:53 There's a place on this path for breaking down the self and the world.
00:01:04 There's a place on this path for building up the self and the world.
00:01:10 There's a place on this path for bearing down.
00:01:16 And there's a place on this path for easing up.
00:01:21 So that means that the path isn't a path.
00:01:25 It can't be fixated.
00:01:27 It arises in between.
00:01:30 A whole bunch of empowering contrasts.
00:01:36 Maturity on the path could be defined as learning how to work those contrasts, how to get rid
00:01:44 of the notion that they are somehow contradictions, see them as complementarities, and to know
00:01:53 how to do what at what time for optimal efficacy.
00:02:00 And that's just practice.
00:02:02 Practice, practice, practice.
00:02:04 You get the hang of it.
00:02:11 It's a matter of alternating.
00:02:14 If the labeling makes you racy, okay, then try dropping the labels.
00:02:22 See if you can still have clarity.
00:02:24 If that makes you spacey, then you have to label again.
00:02:33 There's no answer to this except to constantly remind people that there's no answer to this.
00:02:41 In other words, you have to constantly talk out both sides of your mouth at once and say
00:02:50 there's a place for bearing down, there's a place for easing up.
00:02:53 When a person needs to ease up, they don't hear that you said there's a place for easing
00:02:59 up.
00:03:00 They only hear.
00:03:01 And conversely, there's just no way around it.
00:03:04 Sasaki Roshi has this great expression, shirini megusuri.
00:03:11 It means that people tend to apply eye wash to their anus.
00:03:23 Right medicine, wrong place.
00:03:29 So in other words, if we say there's two sides, you can bear down, you can ease up, you can

00:03:41 label, you can drop labels.

00:03:43 You can even not note and do nothing for a while.

00:03:49 Unfortunately, there's some perverse principle where if we say, you know, you do one or the

00:03:56 other, whatever one is the most convenient one for that person's impurities to grab onto,

00:04:12 that's what they'll hear.

00:04:14 So if they've got ego around performance, they'll hear, I gotta perform.

00:04:20 If they've got ego around, hey, I need to cool out and just feel good and not work too

00:04:28 hard, then they'll hear that, well, I'm supposed to not do anything.

00:04:38 So there's no way around it.

00:04:40 It always happens that way.

00:04:41 No matter how many times you point out, do it this way or this way.

00:04:47 There's something to learn from this, there's something to learn from that, until finally

00:04:51 people figure it out.

00:04:56 Like the metaphor used by the Buddha of tuning the lute, how do you tune a lute?

00:05:04 Well, you tighten the string, but then it's a little too tight, so you loosen, you tighten,

00:05:11 you loosen.

00:05:12 And between the tightening and loosening, you just get a feel for where the lute should

00:05:19 be.

00:05:20 So between these empowering contrasts, you're able to work and optimally use the various

00:05:31 sides that are available to you.