

INTERACTIVE Guided Meditation? ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 So as far as I know, you have developed a form of teaching that I've never known of
00:00:14 before, interactive guided meditation, where instead of telling someone what to do to meditate
00:00:23 or describing it to a group while they meditate, you one-on-one interactively work with someone
00:00:32 and talk to them while they're meditating, with them talking back to you.
00:00:36 Can you tell me how you came up with this?
00:00:42 First let me say, of course, that's not the only way that I teach.
00:00:46 I do those other things too, groups and so forth.
00:00:51 But what I really love is the one-on-one work, which can be done face-to-face in person,
00:01:00 but also works very well over the telephone, which is enormously convenient because people
00:01:06 that study with me, I give them my telephone number and they can call me when they're in
00:01:13 crisis or when they just need to tune up and so forth.
00:01:17 So we can work over the phone also that way.
00:01:21 So I can do it face-to-face or I can do it over the telephone with someone.
00:01:28 How it developed was that I had my own center in Los Angeles many years ago and we had residents
00:01:37 and they would sit, we would sit as a group early in the morning and then they would go
00:01:44 off and do their jobs and then we'd come back and we'd sit together in the evenings.
00:01:49 So what I would do is during the morning sits is I would give them interviews and that's
00:01:54 very standard.
00:01:55 You go into a teacher and you sort of talk about your practice.
00:01:59 But typically the interviews that are done last for 10 minutes, something like that.
00:02:07 You get a chance to ask some questions, we sort of touch base and so forth.
00:02:12 So when I started I was doing those kinds of standard interviews and I don't know quite
00:02:17 how it occurred to me but it just sort of gradually dawned on me, well wait a minute,
00:02:25 you know, what's the metaphor for a meditation teacher?
00:02:29 Well there's a lot of possible metaphors.
00:02:32 The Buddha described himself as a physician.
00:02:35 You know there's a disease called suffering and I have an intervention that is a sufficient
00:02:42 cure for that.
00:02:44 So I thought, well what's the metaphor for me?
00:02:48 I'm a coach.
00:02:52 So what does a coach do?
00:02:53 Well if you go to the YMCA you ask a staff member to show you how to use the equipment
00:03:02 and then they stand by you and they make sure you're using the equipment properly and they
00:03:07 have good form and they give you some encouragements and they answer your questions and they sort
00:03:12 of check in with you.
00:03:14 So I thought, well gee, that's a natural way to go about this.
00:03:20 So I started to say, okay, do this and then I would just sit with them and do my own meditation

00:03:27 and then so ten minutes later, okay, when you did that, what happened?

00:03:33 And they would say, well this happened or that happened.

00:03:36 And then I would say, okay, it means this or I think you should modify it just a little

00:03:43 bit, it might help and so forth.

00:03:46 And we'd like sit for a few more minutes and we'd do that.

00:03:50 And I started to notice it was really working.

00:03:55 Because when you first learn how to meditate, if you're working in the mindfulness tradition,

00:04:04 you're really wearing two hats.

00:04:07 On one hand, you're the meditator.

00:04:10 On the other hand, you're trying to observe yourself and that's very tricky.

00:04:14 It's very hard to do that until you internalize the skill.

00:04:18 So if somebody interactively guides you, you can let go of the hat of being the meditator.

00:04:26 You just follow their guidance and you can stay with your experience.

00:04:33 So as time went on, I started to develop a more and more elaborate decision tree until

00:04:42 it became this incredibly powerful algorithm that just loops and branches until the person

00:04:50 has a breakthrough experience and works with a high degree of reliability.

00:04:59 So it's a combination of you not having to wear the two hats plus the sort of presence

00:05:07 of an experienced teacher as a sort of contact high kind of impact.

00:05:17 Plus the sharing of a lot of expert knowledge because I know the windows of opportunity

00:05:24 that nature presents literally minute to minute.

00:05:29 Nature is constantly presenting people with windows to transcendence.

00:05:34 People don't know how to recognize it.

00:05:37 When I'm working interactively with somebody, I spot when a window is open and I point them

00:05:43 in that direction.

00:05:45 It just works like a charm.

00:05:47 And that's where it's really like a designer meditation because when someone does a guided

00:05:53 meditation, you're still handing over the wheel.

00:05:56 Someone else is still driving on that.

00:05:59 But what this does is it know two guidances.

00:06:03 I think I've been guided privately in meditation over the years with you.

00:06:06 I don't know how many times, dozens and dozens, and it's never been the same way twice.

00:06:13 So I think of it kind of as a designer meditation in that moment using those opportunities.

00:06:20 Yes, that's the general idea.

00:06:23 The trick is not so much knowing how to answer your questions.

00:06:30 The trick is for me to know what are the important questions.

00:06:34 That's what's taken all the years.

00:06:36 To find out what are the important things to look for as a person meditates.

00:06:42 So I know what the right questions are, the most significant ones.

00:06:47 The questions for you to ask?

00:06:48 The questions that I ask you as you're meditating.

00:06:52 That's been the challenge.

00:06:54 And then to find optimal answers for each one of those questions.

00:06:58 So if I ask you ten questions that are absolutely fundamental, and let's say each one has two
00:07:08 possible answers, that means after ten questions I have found the one out of a thousand guidances
00:07:15 that is optimal for you.
00:07:18 If I ask you twenty questions, which could easily happen in an hour period of practice,
00:07:24 I have found the one out of one million guidances that is optimal for you.
00:07:31 So it's like having a tape library with a million tapes and a wizard that decides for
00:07:37 you what is optimal for you by asking you the right questions.
00:07:42 So yeah, you bet it works.
00:07:43 We're off to see the wizard.
00:07:44 You bet it works.
00:07:45 That's why it works.
00:07:46 Well, that plus the other things we talked about.
00:07:49 Very effective.
00:07:50 <http://TheBusinessProfessor.com>