

Mindfulness & Meditation



LESSON 6: ENDING AT THE BEGINNING

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Homework



- Identify ways you have tried to protect yourself from the unsettling experience of being uncertain by creating “knowing”
 - explore how this sets the foundation for future suffering when your ideas are eventually threatened by an ever changing world
 - consider how any word or idea used to describe yourself makes you smaller than you actually are
 - encounter the fear of “not knowing” by sitting with it curiously and practice opening up to groundlessness
- And most importantly...
 - have fun, explore, be playful with your practice!

What We Have Begun to Learn



- **Mindfulness is simple...**
 - Present awareness, curiosity, and intention are all it takes
- **Mindfulness is very difficult...**
 - Present awareness, curiosity, and intention can feel impossible in challenging circumstances
- **These are skills that get stronger with practice, and only with practice**
 - You didn't think you were done did you? 😊
 - Benefits will continue to develop only if you continue to practice
 - ✦ Like a diet or exercise program
 - ✦ “The intention to love is not yet love.” – Thich Nhat Hanh

Why Should I Bother?



- This combination of three simple yet difficult skills, when applied to life, help us to...
 - Suffer well, and thus reduce our suffering
 - Awaken joy and experience more rich pleasure in simple things
 - Come into direct contact with life by removing habits that distance us from our direct experience
 - ✦ Constant stream of thoughts, “time travel”, distraction
 - Develop wisdom and understanding
 - “Relax” into life challenges with freedom and grace

When We Are No Longer Practicing



- You may notice one day that you have stopped practicing
 - Life feels overwhelming
 - Old maladaptive habits have returned
 - It is more difficult to find our sense of self, peace, or equanimity
- When you discover you have strayed from your practice, don't admonish yourself (you deserve kindness)
 - Invite yourself back warmly
 - ✦ “Life felt better when I was practicing...if I would like those benefits again, I could try resuming my practice and see what happens.”
 - The same as *gently* bringing your mind back to your breath when it wanders during a meditation

How to Continue at Home



- **Create a mindful space in your home to stop and be**
 - This space should have no other purpose (e.g., not your bed, your desk where you check email, etc.)
 - This is a place to pause the constant stream of doing and thinking and to come into contact with yourself and life
 - ✦ Simply decorated, free of tools we use to distract ourselves
 - ✦ Does not have to be soundproof or otherwise “perfect”
- **Reminders to practice around the home**
 - Create signs, notes, quotes, or place objects around the home that will invite you into moments of practice
 - ✦ Move these around and find ways to keep them novel to draw your attention or they will fade into the background

How to Continue in the World



- **Create and use “bells of mindfulness”**
 - **Unpredictable reminders to stop and be**
 - ✦ Kentucky license plates
 - ✦ Text messages or phone calls with a different tone
 - ✦ Chimes or bells that can be set to ring throughout the day
- **Join or establish a group mindfulness practice**
 - **This is referred to as a sangha – look for them online or start one with friends**
 - ✦ Our class has become a sangha – shake hands with the people around you and organize a time to get together again to meditate!

How to Continue in Life



- “Water the seeds” that will strengthen your practice frequently throughout the day
 - Practice informal meditation by being present and curious with intention when you brush your teeth, etc.
 - ✦ “It is easy to be mindful when you are a monk, it is hard when you are a busy mother”
- Read and study
 - There are many wonderful resources – I have provided a list on the OLLI website of some good places to start
 - ✦ Thich Nhat Hanh, Pema Chodron, etc.
- Find a good teacher/therapist/mindfulness mentor
 - drcamerongordon@gmail.com 😊

Homework



- Live mindfully and enjoy your life!!!

Thank you so much for all you have given me throughout this class. I have personally gained so much from teaching you and I am deeply grateful to you for it!

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