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Remembering Awareness

by Padme Nina Livingstone

Are you here? Are you listening? Please be clear and honest with yourself about the space you are allowing for this experience. Listening to one thing and thinking about another, or listening to one thing while doing another, is not really being alive in either experience. Being alive with this moment, being aware, is about being clearly present in this one moment.being fully alive in this moment, to whatever is happening.

This is not easy work. As Toni Packer has called it, "This work of Awareness".....requires the intention to learn a new way of being with our lives. Aren't we usually trying to do so many things at once that life has become a rush from doing to doing without any awareness...just checking things off a never -ending list of stuff so that we can move onto the next, ad infinitum...until we collapse from exhaustion, stress, or disease?

Is it working? Is this the way you want to continue living? Is there a small soft voice within that tells you this is not the way you want your life to be? Is that why you are listening to this talk?

How are we living? We continually get caught up in our thoughts of past and future events... how people, those we love and those we have conflicts with, should be different than they are..... We live in our thoughts about the way things and people should be, continually confused by our conflicting beliefs. instead of being with things as they ARE.

"We live in our thoughts about the way things and people should be... instead of being with things as they ARE."

The shoulds and shouldn'ts have been unconscious for so long, that we believe them to be true. We act from these shoulds and shouldn'ts, completely unquestioning whether they are based in truth or not. Can you see this?

Let's look at an example many can relate to...."My child should do better in school." This desire to make someone different is often expressed by us as parents, and to us, as children. Hasn't this simple unexamined thought created great pain and suffering? Or if not about school...perhaps a parent thought something else should be different? Was that helpful? Did it feel loving?

School was a difficult place for me to learn in. If tested with today's standards, I would have been labeled Dyslexic and ADHD. I was fortunate that my father paid no attention to my school experience until I was ready to think about college. It was then, however that I realized he had no idea who I was as a student, as he yelled and threatened to lock me in my room to make me study so I could go to Radcliff or Smith, or Vassar. Tremendous pain was created in my relationship with him at the time.

When we see things and people as they really are...these thoughts of wanting someone to be different dissolve in awareness. When we simply notice thoughts, not adding anything to the experience of them...thoughts can then move through the mind without getting stuck, as clouds move across the sky. We notice their presence, and notice their movement as they pass by...no disturbance when seen with awareness...nothing to Velcro to....just clouds passing by. Whoosh!

We may ask, How do we begin to live our lives with more awareness? How do we learn to hear our

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thoughts and feel our bodies, so this awareness being spoken of, comes alive in our day- to -day lives? How do we become more present, aware of what we are saying, feeling and doing?

These questions do not require a complicated answer. By our conscious intention to simply be more aware.... we begin a movement toward a deeply personal questioning...one we have understood through our own experience. It is not something one person can give to another. When our experiences and our understanding come together they become personal wisdom. Each of us must find out for ourselves what it means to be fully alive.....

In the beginning, of our journey with awareness, we experience our awareness only on occasion. Training the mind to pay attention in a new way takes practice and a strong desire for more clarity... Over time, we notice we are aware more often... and so it goes. This desire grows out of seeing- for ourselves- how living the other way doesn't give us what we want. We naturally want more love, patience, honesty in our lives. We see that it is our unconscious thoughts, words, and actions that cause us to be unloving, impatient and dishonest with ourselves and others.

So, by taking the proverbial "baby steps", we begin to see from our own experience how awareness, conscious awareness, brings us closer to being more of who we do want to be.

Simple, but not easy. It takes practice... just as learning anything new takes practice.

Now, let's take a deep breath and let it out slowly. Listen carefully to what is being suggested as a possibility for an alternative way of being alive.

In the stillness of doing nothing... turn your awareness to the sounds around you. Just listen to whatever is happening in your world of sound. Trees swaying, dogs barking, clocks ticking, house creaking... whatever sounds are alive in your present life... be present with them.



Now turn your awareness in toward your breath. Experience your breath anywhere you find it. You may feel it in your throat, chest, or in your belly, or all three. You know there is breathing... that is a fact.

Sometimes we actually wonder where the breath is, when someone tells us to listen to it, or feel it. If this is the case, direct your attention to the air going in and out of your nose. Stay with this experience for a while.

Try to follow the path of the air into your lungs. NO hurrying, no pushing, Just imagine, if you will, the path air takes into the body and let it flow wherever it goes. You may find your awareness dropping lower. That's just fine. If your awareness stays at the nose that's OK too. Remember there is no right or wrong way to breathe. Wherever you are aware of the breath in this moment... stay with that experience.

Listening to these words, and staying with your breath... you are resting, in a true sense, in the here and now. This is a wonderful way to rest anytime we feel the need to do so. It is a good way to remember to be present in the here and now...with what is... Notice what's happening.

"Our continual pain and suffering is a messenger that tells us there must be a better way to live."

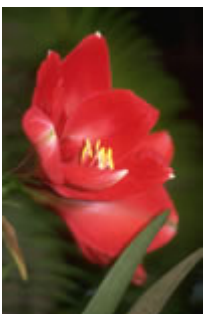
During this time of silence, what did you notice that occurred? Movement of energy? Thoughts coming and going? Stuck energy in particular areas? Did you notice that awareness moved from one area of focus to the next? Did you sense attachment to particular experiences? Attachment to a story going through the mind? Particular thought lines? Was there a forgetting of self? Of Breath? Of the body? Was there a moment when the awareness of breath returned? All this happens in awareness. When we are quiet and focused. We can experience the intricate workings of this human condition and come to understand, with compassion and clarity, the inner chaos we all experience so much of the time.

It is by the noticing, simply and directly, that we experience our natural state of awareness. It is not by pushing toward a goal, or any other idea created by what we have read, or thought, or seen. It is the direct whole experience of what is occurring. Now.

In our daily lives, when we feel overwhelmed and stressed out, we can learn new ways to drop all inner chaos for a moment's rest, and simply focus on our breath. One moment at a time...one breath at a time. When we remember, we can stop what we're doing, and notice where our breath is. Follow its movement for a while. Things often calm down being with the breath. Or we can turn our complete attention to what we are doing...Some people find it helpful to name what it is they are doing to help bring awareness back to the moment. Driving...driving...washing dishes...washing dishes...walking...walking... sitting...sitting., breathing...breathing.

We find when we are completely in the moment, we are actually more alive and aware than ever before.

Next time you are washing dishes try this simple awareness exercise. Wash the dishes. That's all. Just wash dishes. Notice and name each movement of the hands as you do the job. Slow down...Thoughts coming and going... the sponge in your hand, water, scrubbing, rinsing, putting in drain. One dish at a time. Again and again. Notice any. Awareness ...feet on floor. Belly leaning on the sink...hands in water...hands out of water, in the air...picking up a pot..... All this IS awareness. When we are fully present with whatever we are doing, we are being AWARE.



When we are driving the car with awareness, we notice our breathing, our physical contact with the car seat, our movement through space at whatever speed we're traveling, other vehicles, rules of the road, our thoughts about other cars, other drivers, all that is occurring...noticing without judgment, blame, awareness of moving attentively through space.

Sitting, walking, or laying down, experiencing everything just as it is...in all its constant movement and change. No pushing, no holding onto anything...just noticing whatever is happening. It's all just fine as it is.

Whatever we are doing, we can bring a different level of awareness ...a fresh new clarity to the simplest task. A deep realization of the pure enough-ness of this moment.

Remembering awareness..... it is a freedom we have only imagined possible. By definition, meditation is actually happening whenever we are being aware. When we practice sitting meditation, we are giving ourselves the gift of practicing awareness in a quiet space, with few distractions. This helps to balance the busy, stress-filled pace of our daily lives in a concrete way.

Sitting meditation makes it easier to experience awareness because we are being physically still and quiet. We find the inner space, a restful place...we actually find that this inner quiet is our natural home and like returning to it every day. We find it easier to remember our focus during the day, and find our lives generally less stressful. We are actively retraining our minds to have focused, aware consciousness.

"...our natural state of awareness. ... is the direct whole experience of what is occurring. Now."

It is recommended that we practice awareness meditation at least 10-15 minutes every day. Many people set their clocks earlier and take advantage of the quiet early morning world. Others prefer to meditate in the evening before bed. It quiets the mind and can help us fall asleep easier...Meditation in both morning and evening is a wonderful gift to give yourself! Try setting up a special spot for meditation in your home...nothing fancy is necessary. Just a chair or cushion, reminding you of your intention whenever you pass by.

This journey is actually a natural evolution. Our continual pain and suffering is a messenger that tells us there must be a better way to live. If we are listening!Sometimes it takes hard work, and it is completely worth it! It is the single most worthwhile work we can do, because it grows more loving kindness in the world. And we certainly need as much as we can grow..Do take care.....Thank you.

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