

## The Mountain Meditation

Today is the seventeenth in a series of articles on mindfulness. To review, mindfulness is a form of stress reduction. In the simplest terms, mindfulness is paying attention to the present moment without judgment. It focuses our attention on the only moment in which we are alive, which is right now. Paying attention in this way can reduce stress, depression, anxiety and even potentially bring about healing. Today I will explore a valuable form of meditation which can help you take life less seriously. If we can stop taking life personally, it can relieve us of a great deal of stress.

In my last article, I explored being mindful in aspects of daily life which we are often unconscious of. I recommended to begin paying attention to routine activities to see what lessons can be learned. Today I would extend this concept to another daily experience that can be a great teacher. The experience we want to become mindful of is the weather.

The goal is to use the weather as a metaphor for our body and mind. We will shift our perspective on the weather both in the outside world and the inner weather of our life. The first mindful experience is to notice the aspects of the outside weather. Pay attention to the sensations of the weather. For example, notice the colors you see and how they change, the smell of rain, the temperature of the air, the phases of the moon, the blowing of the wind against your skin and the heat of the sun's rays.

Next is to notice how you feel about the weather. How do you feel when it rains for five days in a row? Does the full moon seem to upset you? Are you tired all winter long? Do you favor the cold of winter or the heat of summer? The interesting aspect to discover about asking these questions is the impersonal nature of the weather.

The weather is just doing what it does. How you feel about it does not alter it. What we want to do with this exercise is not take how we feel about the weather personally. We notice that the weather of the environment is impersonal to our emotions. Storms come and go. Seasons change despite how we feel.

Now we want to use the metaphor of the weather as it relates to the inner weather of our bodies and minds. Using our imaginations, we can see that the body and mind can experience storms. Storms in the body can be seen like formations of weather with potential thunder, wind and rain. Alternatively, the mind can at times seem to be clouded and dark.

The key concept here is that what we experience in the body and mind tends to be like the weather. It is not constant, but rather a dynamic change of seasons. Clouds in the mind can aggregate or dissipate. My challenge to you is to shift your perspective of these inner patterns and to see them as impersonal. Like the weather outside, your inner weather is a natural phenomenon. The storms of stress come and go. You look at upsets as necessary, like the seasons. This practice cultivates an understanding and wisdom about the mental

and emotional aspect of our lives. If we consider our inner experience like the weather we can take life less seriously. The weather outside and the weather inside is impersonal.

The exercise to practice today is called “The Mountain Meditation”. Sit upright in a chair and breathe in and out pulling the air through your nose and into your belly. Close your eyes and feel the belly expand on the inhale and contract on the exhale. Now imagine you are a mountain. A mountain is firm, unmoving and steadfast. The mountain sits and watches as the weather formations change. It does not have an opinion on whether it is a thunderstorm, a blizzard, or desert heat.

To the mountain, it is all just passing clouds, forever new and changing. It is impersonal to the mountain what storms arise and fall away, and it understands the storms always pass. As you sit with the resolve of a mountain, try as best as you can to let what you are experiencing in your body and mind be just as it is without trying to change it. Try to remember that to the mountain, the passing seasons are impersonal and a new one will emerge.

When you feel like you are done with the meditation, and you want to get up from your chair, try to sit for five more minutes. Push yourself to stay as a mountain for longer than you intended. Notice the impulse to stop and then try to let the body and mind stay with the inner weather.

The practical usefulness of this process is allowing things to be as they are without taking credit. The mountain does not take credit for the sun shining, it only notices and watches. We can take life less seriously by just watching mental formations like they are the weather. Equanimity, balance and clarity are the natural results of sitting firm, like a mountain.

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