

The Light of Peace

Today is the twelfth 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 return to the practice of meditation and outline a way to simplify the process.

In the last article, I wrote about simplicity and the attitude that less is more. In giving instructions and guidance on meditation it is wise to keep it simple. Meditation can be fulfilling and peaceful, but it can also be frustrating, especially for a beginner.

The difficulty we all encounter in meditation is the endless mental chatter that distracts our attention. Thoughts, ideas, fantasies, memories, and anticipations all seem to come and go in a chaotic stream of irrationality. Spiritually speaking, the problem is the tendency to identify and take ownership of the thinking. There is an inclination to claim authorship and to call your thoughts, “my thoughts.”

Once you assume the thoughts are “mine” they are valued. After you value them, they attract your attention and are harder to let go of. This may sound crazy at first to understand, but upon reflection, you will come to see that you are not the inventor or author of thinking. Thinking is a spontaneous process independent of the real you. You are the projector of thinking, but not the thoughts themselves. You project out the movie of your life, but you are not the movie. You merely watch the movie. The movie can be a tragedy, or a comedy, however you want to value it is how you will see it.

With this new understanding, we can proceed to practice meditation with less frustration. There are various styles of meditation which intend this outcome. The style I will teach you today is called, “Bypassing the mind.” This style is a simple and effective way to reduce stress in your life.

To begin, sit upright in a chair and close your eyes. Place your right hand below your naval and breathe through your nose drawing air down past your chest into your belly. Feel the abdomen expand on the inhale and contract on the exhale.

After a few breaths, begin to witness the visual field behind your closed eyes. Focus on what is witnessed. Notice that with your eyes closed there is darkness, but also notices that within the darkness there are numerous tiny bits of light dancing around.

These small dancing light phenomena are called, “Phosgenes.” In this style of meditation all you need to do is watch the phosgenes and breathe. Nothing else needs to happen. In focusing on the tiny specks of light you are bypassing thinking. If your mind wanders away into distracting thoughts, merely return your attention to watching the phosgenes. Imagine you are at one with the light and relaxation will follow. Breathe in and breathe out while watching the light, it is that simple.

To illustrate this process with a practical example, consider driving on a country road. When you are driving on a country road, you are paying attention to the driving and not on the passing scenery. Most of the passing scenery goes by unnoticed. Only what is valued is recorded by your awareness, most of the country road is ignored. Now with this example in mind, consider your meditation the same. You can focus on the light of the phosgenes like paying attention to the road you are driving on. You don't have to notice the passing thoughts which are like the roadside scenery. You can let the thoughts pass by just like all of the scenery you miss while driving. As we watch the light, emotions such as fear, stress and anxiety fall away.

The peace of meditation can be found right under your nose as you breathe and right behind your eyelids as you watch the light. A wonderful quotation about fear is, "Fear knocked at the door, love answered, and no one was there." When you are at one with the light of your best self, fear is impossible. Sit quietly and close your eyes to see the light of who you are.

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