

I'm struck by how difficult it is to talk about this subject. As Linc [Rhodes] mentioned, we go back a long way. When we first met Seung Sahn Sunim, we were struck by the simplicity of some of the things he would say. One of them was, "when you open your mouth, you're wrong." As soon as you say something, it can turn to shit in your mouth, because there are limits to what one can say in words about being. Normally we spend enormous amounts of time and energy **doing**, and if you get into the spiritual trip, you can spend enormous amounts of time and energy **doing being**, one example would be talking about how wonderful yoga or Zen is all the time. Another would be attempts to imitate other people who you think are someplace special. Words often just compound the difficulty. You might start to talk the way you think those "special" beings are supposed to talk. As we all know, it can be a trap.

That's not to say that speech is not extremely important, but I find in my work that it's hard to know what to say. It's very hard to advertise a way to healing, to health. We're not very precise when we use terms such as "health" or "healing" or "medicine". My work takes place in an unusual environment; a clinic in a large medical center in which people are trained in meditation, mostly from the Zen and Vipassana traditions.

In ways that are hard for me to completely understand, I was able to establish this clinic. People are referred to this unit by their doctors for a wide range of medical problems usually involving a significant degree of physical and psychological suffering.

It's hard to label this training. It's not that we can't call it meditation; we do call it that. But we don't tell Zen stories, for instance. It's an attempt to bring people from a point of suffering into an intense involvement with a process that is, to a large extent, outside the boundaries of their consciousness or awareness. Very often our patients come feeling that their internal resources are extremely depleted, and they usually do not have the belief system that it is possible to change.

The potential for change is already here, already inherent in one's being. You don't have to go anywhere, or get anything, and there is no method. Our challenge is to guide an individual using his or her own energies and not become an authority figure in the process. How can you help a person move in the direction of greater wholeness and health, when he or she is whole to begin with? Our view is that this wholeness is not being perceived correctly by either the individual or by their family or physicians, or our culture's way of viewing illness.

I really don't know what we are attending this conference for. I certainly don't know what I'm here for, except that I couldn't turn down the invitation to visit because I have strong "karmic" bonds with certain people here. But as long as I am here, I thought it might be of interest to give you a sketch of one alternative way of working with meditation practices from similar traditions, but within a world in which people do not know about nor would they ever come to a Zen Center of Buddhist monastery. It's not that they couldn't benefit from it, but that it's not in their domain of conscious or even subconscious possibilities.

The other thing that drew me here was the opportunity to try to find common ground with Native American spiritual traditions and to learn more about them from women who are living examples of their vision.

At the ceremony last night many people offered their separateness to the fire, to the consuming energy of the fire. On the deepest level, there is no separateness to be offered. We are not recognizing that we are already connected, al-

Meditation Practice in a Hospital Setting

By Jon Kabat-Zinn

ready whole. In Buddhism there is an image that likens individuals to waves on the ocean. We rise up like a wave with birth and manifestation, and then sink back into the ocean with death. Waves "wave" to each other—"Hi, I'm over here." But we're just waving to another part of the same ocean. In fact, when the wave moves, it's not the water that is moving. The wave has its own existence or life, but it's basically an illusory separateness.

I'd like to share something with you that we share with the patients in the stress reduction clinic. It's a quotation from Albert Einstein, and when I first read it in the New York Times in 1970, I almost fell off my chair because it's such a remarkable expression of Buddhism, coming from the person who completely and singlehandedly revolutionized our notion of space and time and energy. Coming from a yogi or a saint would be impressive enough, but coming from a scientist of the stature of Einstein I am even more impressed by the message of connectedness.

I've probably given away thousands of copies of this quotation. By way of introducing it, when Einstein was living at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, he used to get letters from all over the world. Everybody knew of him—his friendly face, hair going everywhere, that mustache, a face of tremendous compassion, no socks, sloppy dress, but everybody knew him as "the smartest man in the world" and that he had a reputation for compassion, so many people would write to him about their personal problems. The amazing thing was that he wrote back.

An ordained Rabbi had written explaining that he had sought in vain to comfort his 19 year old daughter over the death of her sister, "a sinless beautiful 16 year old child."

Einstein wrote this: (I'll read it the way he wrote it, but you can interject "she" for "he.") "A human being is a part of the whole called by us "universe," a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures, and the whole nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and the foundation for inner security."

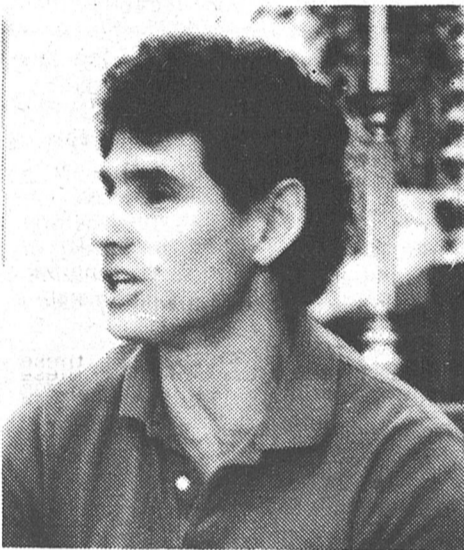
Keep in mind that this is Einstein here talking about us being limited in time and space, the man who revolutionized our entire comprehension of time and space. What he is basically saying is that from the point of view of physics, we are the entire universe. We contain it not just in terms of atoms, but also the sky, the earth, everything. The practice of mindfulness, or any way which brings one in touch with the whole, is the practice of healing. That is what the words healing, health, and healthy mean, **wholeness**.

Our task is to see if we can be honest enough with ourselves to contact the multiplicity of levels in which wholeness expresses itself simultaneously. The fact that you have a body doesn't negate the fact that there are other people in the room who may have different feelings and experiences. It's important to develop a multi-dimensional sensitivity, so that you're not stuck being right on one level and missing the boat on the other levels. That's easy to do. But to pay the kind of attention that Ruth is suggesting, that requires discipline.

(From Sunday workshop) What I'd like to do is continue the momentum of

what Ruth was working with this morning, because she was really zeroing in on a very precise and beautiful way on the essence of mindfulness practice. You could see very rapidly how much of a screen comes up between the actuality of our experience and the feeling of it. So when there's sound, almost immediately there's something accompanying it—thinking, interpreting, liking, disliking, comparing with other people—and it prevents us from really owning, being with sound, really hearing it, really listening.

If you just consider sound for a moment, what comes up in the mind with sound can create enormous problems in our lives, especially when we try to communicate with each other. The word communication means communing, being with, connecting. As soon as you hear something, if your own mind is chattering, thinking about what you're going to do in response and how you're going to come out on top or look better, you're not really listening. There's no harmony. It's not surprising that language becomes an occasion for disunity, for misunderstanding and miscommunication, rather than that kind of harmony which is potentially there. It all lies in not attending, not paying attention.



So this practice, whether it be under the name of Zen or Vipassana or yoga or any other name, has to do with re-learning this capacity to really attend in the moment. Since our lives to some extent are denatured, we have lost that. We need to work at it. It's discipline, a commitment to remember or bring back into focus the ways in which we tune out so frequently.

As everybody in this Zen business knows, anything can happen. You hang out a shingle that says "Zen" and it is a magnet for anything and everything. So you have to be in the business of "whatever comes up, that's what we're going to do." In a sense, we've created a clinic where you don't need a particular diagnosis. Anything that comes up is okay, because it's all included within this domain of life and life stress.

We had a fireman referred to us who was in his early 40's, and had been a fireman for 20 years. He was in a burning building and at a certain point the roof collapsed and several of his colleagues died. He was overcome with smoke and had to be dragged from the building. After that, every time he tried to put on his gas mask to go into a building, he had an intense panic reaction, accompanied by hyperventilation. Losing consciousness a good deal of those times, he had to be taken to the emergency room. In addition to the embarrassment of this, he found he really couldn't function in his job anymore.

He saw a psychiatrist and was put on a number of medications, but nothing worked. He spent over a year very depressed and not able to fight fires. His fellow workers were very good about it, but he was like a shell-shock victim. Somehow he was referred to us.

He started off in the first class of the stress reduction program focusing on breathing. Of course, since he had hyperventilation, paying any attention to

his breathing triggered his panic reaction. We worked with him over a period of weeks, suggesting that he stay with it and not run away from the experience, that this was in fact the front line of what he needed to face, because this was his reality at that moment. He was willing to do that. He gradually got into feeling a sense of friendliness toward and acceptance of his breathing. After a few weeks of sitting, he could reach the point where the breath would come in, the breath would go out, and it was okay.

To make a long story short, within four weeks of practicing the meditation, he was back in burning buildings fighting fires and wearing his mask. He had solved his problem. He came for that and he got it, although he might not have predicted that. What really happened is that the practice changed his entire way of seeing himself. His whole life changed. He began to experience that he had power to handle his own problems. His relationship with his wife and children changed. He had all sorts of loose ends and scars that needed to be healed within the family. That was what really came out.

Very often a person comes in with a particular label, a particular problem. Usually one makes some progress towards it, not always spectacular, but a good deal of progress. But the most interesting work is not that at all, but has to do with the way that people begin to heal themselves by feeling their own authenticity and the fact that they're not just on a trip from birth to death that they have no say about. My personal feeling is, that as long as you're breathing, there is more right with you than wrong with you.

Even if you're a day away from death, acceptance of that and allowing things to be as they are is really all that is required to step into consciousness. Since we have that available to us in every moment, we're making a big deal over nothing. So we work on the most elementary level with people, helping them to tune into their bodies, their breathing, their fear. They begin to see that one does not have to be caught by everything that was formerly associated with terror or despair or feelings of hopelessness. Within that stuff, you can work with it in such a way to rediscover your own connectedness.

I enjoy pointing out to the medical students that the words "medicine" and "meditation" come from the same root meaning. Medicine means "to cure", in Latin. But its root meaning in Sanskrit is "to measure." Medicine is the restoring of right internal measure. It's not the modern Western view of an external standard of measure, like measuring how tall you are with a ruler, but it is the right internal measure that every aspect of the universe has in itself. Medicine is the helping, by administration of medicines and care, to reestablish that right internal measure, but it has to come from within. Everybody knows that, except doctors sometimes forget. (laughter)

Meditation is nothing other than perceiving right internal measure—of sensation, of thought of the moment—of all things that we almost never really attended to. The practice is ruthlessly simple. An alternative to the exercises that we did for the past hour would have been just to sit for an hour. It can be very painful if you're not used to it. The point is, there's enormous wealth in that "non doing." We are so busy all the time, doing, doing, doing, and creating all this stuff, that very often the intoxication of the stuff creates a screen and prevents us from simply hearing, moving, eating, loving, touching.

So it all becomes complexly hearing, complexly touching, and so forth, and that creates stress, disunity and separation within what we already have, which is unity. There is no separation, as Einstein told us.

MEDITATION IN A HOSPITAL SETTING *continued from page 8*

We have worked with over 2000 people over the last 8 years who have been through the stress reduction program, and 80% of them report that they're still practicing in some form or another. Most have been very open. If one person like the fireman I told you about has a dramatic improvement (of course, we had him come back and tell his story on the first day of the next class) in the first or second week, then most of the other 20 or 30 people in the class suddenly find that their level of belief in their own possibilities goes up accordingly....What we're doing, in the context of the medical model of illness and health, is quite

revolutionary. Yet we are finding that there has been minimal resistance, if any, to using meditation in the context of stress reduction training, either by the patients or the physicians who send their patients.

I find it very interesting work. For instance, if I showed my patients this flyer [for the "Healing The Mind And Spirit Conference"], they would never show up. I consider what we're doing to be priceless, to be extremely important to the well-being of our planet, particularly in this period of time, that people begin to recognize our connectedness and power, individually, to make changes in our lives, to grow and heal and collectively do the same....What we're finding is that you can take this teaching and give it to ordinary folks in an unadulterated fashion without the trappings that we

may have become used to in a Zen Center. For example, a gold Buddha would not be helpful to my clients (laughter)....

It's wonderful for me to come back here [to Providence Zen Center]. My heart just bursts, because I trained in this tradition and I absolutely loved it, the chanting in Korean, the bowing, the gold Buddha...But it wouldn't wash at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. What I'm learning is that I care about mindfulness and I could care less about the packaging. I think it's so important that we should all take responsibility in our own ways to be as mindful as we can. Within the practice, that's all you need to do, because the rest of it just spills out, takes care of itself no matter what your job is. There's no real difference between "us" and "them", there is no us and

them. We don't think of "the patients" or "the staff", we are all just people.

You have to be sensitive to how easy it is to turn people off, or to get them to feel that you're on one side of the fence and they're on the other, how easy it is to create boundaries that become solidified and then reduce possibilities....Ram Dass once received a letter from a student in which she told him: "When I was a Buddhist, I had all sorts of problems with my parents. But when I became a Buddha, everything was okay."□

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FINDING YOUR SACRED SPACE

continued from page 6

reaches to all worlds to help our relatives, friends, co-workers and even those yet unborn. All are benefitted by one's inner practice. This is foundation practice.

Anything else that we learn...is vibration. All is thought and wishing to communicate with one another. You are waiting to hear from the trees, and the trees are waiting to hear from you. By doing this practice, we become more aware of that inner sound, the stream of clear mind. The message of the earth is more apparent to our ears. We recognize how the illusions of separation, of anger, of "us" and "them", are but thought forms. Essentially, we are all one in the stream.

In this time, what we can do to help is awaken from the dream, awaken ourselves and others to the realization that all is essentially well. The clear light, the fire, is right within us. What we need to do is get out some good brooms and sweep out the fireplace, sweep out the hearth. What are these ashes that get in the way of that light burning brightly? Pride. Pride has many faces. It's also pride when we think we're not good

enough. That's like saying the Creator didn't have enough good sense when s/he gave you this body and these gifts....

The wise person looks to cultivate the thoughts of peace and harmony. First, by recognizing what are the thoughts that cause discord, disease, in my own life....How are my thought, word and deed contributing to the apparent confusion? What can I do to make it better? Then you make an affirmation: "I affirm that I have the skills and ability to communicate essence to essence with others, and to accomplish the goals that have been set for myself and others." You make that affirmation in the beginning of the day and say, "I will do 3 things this day that I may accomplish my life purpose of harmony, peace, and good relationship...."

You have a gift the earth needs right now, to bring peace on this earth. Take it out of the closet, let it be apparent. How? By ascertaining what are your life skills. What gifts have you brought to this life? What are you good at? When do you feel clearest, brightest? When is there most energy? That's an indication of what your skills are. Then you want to refine those skills so that there is a one-pointedness of mind, and no doubt that you are doing your work that is beneficial to all beings. This comes through practice and affirming, "I shall accomplish these things for the benefit of family, clan, nation, the planet." Just

by saying these words over and over, we counteract those poisons and doubts that curtail our completing a task....

Your gifts are needed. So many people have a talent for poetry, and their poems might free another person from grief, yet that person puts off writing the poem. "The family needs me to wash dishes." "This is more important." "That's not going to make money." So you put aside that gift.

That gift is your muse, your power, your totem. When you know you have a creative gift and you put it aside, you're putting aside some of your life force and some of the hope for future generations. To cultivate your art, to clarify your mind, is not just a thing of fun, it is also a spiritual duty so that you can bring abundance on all levels to your family and friends. As long as the gifts that are flowing within you are unmanifest, other gifts will also be held back in the large circle of life.

For example, we are sitting here in this beautiful temple. Sweat, hard work and sacrifice made it happen, and people's practice keeps it going. From here, there goes into the earth an energy that gives the earth strength, that purifies the atmosphere around here, that transforms some of the suffering in the city. Just because people sit here with stillness of mind and making prayer, they make this even more sacred space, and we receive that benefit wherever we are.

Suppose in our hearts we say, "I don't believe the earth is alive, I don't believe in God, I don't believe my mind counts." That's closing a door to one of the rivers of life force that goes from the holy places. Eventually people with doubt all over the world close the water of life. Earth is making new water all the time. It is only human beings holding back emotion, feeling scarcity: not enough love, not enough time. Human beings holding back mind, holding tight, then closing the life force flowing through the earth. Then there's less energy in the atmosphere.

It is a reciprocal relationship between you and the earth and the sky. What we are thinking, how we are feeling, affects the entire circle. If you are feeling sadness or anger and you go to the office, certainly it will be reflected back to you in a flash. It is like that even with our mother the earth. So when you make peace with yourself, when you are willing to stabilize your mind and cultivate that energy of generosity, it is good for everyone around the earth.

To open our hands, to manifest our heart's creative gifts, is something that is done by walking upon the land. Your creative potential, which may yet be unmanifest, is waiting to come through your hands. It flows through the energy of the heart. So the wise practitioner gets to know the nature of their own mind, looks deeply at one's own heart and recognizes, "These thoughts are here. Are they appropriate in this lifetime? If not, I cast them to the fires. Are these thoughts appropriate to bring forth the creative gifts? If so, I shall plant them as seeds of good cause, that may have good relationship for many generations to come."□

Our thought is making it happen. How you feel about yourself is determining how nations will respond to one another. If you cannot forgive yourself, then how can nations overcome the illusion of "us" and "them"? That's why it is so important that we come to good relationship around the child within us, that we recognize our parents for what they are, ourselves for what we are—without blame, without shame. Each one is unique and we've chosen to be together....

Even now there are beings looking at us when we meditate, contemplate, pray, who are saying, "Is this the opportunity that we may bring something good to the earth?" Remember, somebody is watching you, thinking, "Are you the doorway?" Can the light beings pass through?" Can they be born? Are you making the effort?

Someone's always watching. So let us be alert and generate energy of love and compassion, so that the beings of the coming age see a fertile ground to come into. What is the ground? Our consciousness. What are the seeds being planted? Our intention to do something good. What are the weeds? Confusion. What is our duty? To keep the garden clear. That's our life....

The world needs your special gifts, so you cannot keep these seeds away too long. They will even sprout in the darkness, unattended. Why not bring them out to the garden of clear mind and let something good happen? They say that we can even disarm missiles with our thoughts of peace and love. I certainly saw native people make planes and tanks stop. Even tanks stood still.

Let us make enough love that this war machine comes to peace. What are nations but individuals? It just takes a few of us singing that song of peace to make a difference. You are the one to tip the scale. So take care. Ho.□

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