

MINDFULNESS

'Just this, just this'
Ryokan
Zen poet

The State of Inattention

Mindfulness is a direct and immediate awareness of what is happening each moment of life. Yet most of the time we pass through life half asleep, in a state of inattention. "Everyone has some degree of mindfulness. The ordinary business of life, driving a car, baking bread, and so on requires that we are mindful or attentive to the present moment to some extent. But this usually alternates each minute with long lapses of forgetfulness."

When we look at our lives, it's amazing to see how much of the time we live on automatic pilot, half asleep, unaware, oblivious to what we are doing and what goes on around us. We can walk down the street and all of a sudden find we've arrived at our destination, and yet remember nothing at all of what we saw or thought or heard while we were walking. If we reflect on how many things we have done half-heartedly, we can feel our hesitation, our distraction, our fears, and the deadening effect they have had on our life. When we are mindful, there is a quality of being total, of being wholeheartedly and fully present for any activity . . . When we have given something our wholehearted attention, whether work or school or a relationship or dharma practice, there is a certain energy and joy that arise in the mind. It may not even matter so much what results we end up with, because in doing something completely – with awareness and in a wholehearted way – the very doing is in itself satisfying. To live with mindfulness is to live in a caring and heartfelt way. (1)

The essence of mindfulness is to be open to and aware of the reality of the present moment. But initially it is difficult to dwell in the present *now* as the mind naturally inclines to memories of the past or speculations of the future. "There may be a certain effort to focus on the *now*, but perhaps only twenty percent of the consciousness is based on the present and the rest is scattered into the past or the future. Therefore there is not enough force to see directly what is there."

One must develop the ability to know the situation. In other words one has to develop a panoramic awareness, an all-pervading awareness, knowing the situation *at that very moment*. It is a question of knowing the situation and opening one's eyes to that very moment of newness, and this is not particularly a mystical experience or anything mysterious at all, but just direct, open and clear perception of what *is now*. And when a person is able to see what *is now* without being in-

fluenced by the past or any expectation of the future, but just seeing the very moment of *now*, then at that moment there is no barrier at all. For a barrier could only arise from associations with the past or expectation of the future. So the present moment has no barriers at all. (2)

When we begin to examine and investigate our body, mind and feelings, we realize how conditioned and reactive our states are. But mindful awareness opens the possibility of consciously choosing a healthier, non-reactive response to whatever arises in our life experiences. "To live free of patterns is to live in awareness. Our personality is made up of patterns of reaction that prevent us from responding appropriately to the present moment."

There are two levels of mindful awareness: the initial perception of an object, thought, feeling or sensation, and then the conditioned reaction:

So there is the superficial awareness of the tree, the bird, the door, and there is the response to that, which is thought, feeling, emotion. Now when we become aware of this response, we might call it a second depth of awareness. There is the awareness of the rose, and the awareness of the response to the rose. Often we are unaware of this response to the rose. In reality it is the same reality which sees the rose and which sees the response. It is one movement and it is wrong to speak of the outer and inner awareness. When there is a visual awareness of the tree without any psychological involvement there is no division in relationship. But when there is a psychological response to the tree, this response is a conditioned response, it is the response of past memory, past experiences, and this response is a division in relationship. This response is the birth of what we shall call the "me" in relationship and the "non-me." This is how you place yourself in relationship to the world. This is how you create the individual and the community. The world is seen not as it is, but in its various relationships to the "me" of memory. Now can there be an awareness, an observation of the tree, without any judgement, and can there be an observation of the response, the reaction, without any judgement? In this way we eradicate the principle of division, the principle of "me" and "non-me," both in looking at the tree and in looking at ourselves. (3)

The central role of conscious attention lies at the heart of mindfulness. "Attention is the ability to experience what arises without falling into the conditioned reactions that cause suffering. Attention is always present in potential but is unable to function because of conditioning."

The essential tool is attention – not the weak, unstable, reactive attention that is part of our automatic functioning, but the strong, stable, and volitional attention cultivated in such disciplines as meditation. Active attention, composed of mindfulness and awareness, is the key. Attention, in this sense, is not intellectual or physical. It is energy, the same kind of energy that powers emotions. Attention is used to dismantle the wall that separates us from what we are. This wall

consists of conditioned patterns of perception, emotional reactions and behaviors. The wall has many components: conventional notions of success and failure, the belief that I am a separate and independent entity, reactive emotional patterns, passivity, an inability to open to others, and misperceptions about the nature of being. Dismantling these habituated conditioned patterns is not a smooth process. Things don't unfold in a neat progression. Attention is the one principle on which we can always rely. We meet every problem encountered by bringing attention to what arises in experience. (4)

Quality of Attention and Awareness

With mindfulness we simply notice, simply observe what is happening in the present moment. In the words of Krishnamurti: "There is a quality of energy which can be called an awareness – an awareness in which there is no evaluation, judgement, condemnation or comparison but merely an attentive observation, a seeing of things exactly as they are, both inwardly and outwardly." In the Buddhist tradition mindfulness is sometimes referred to as *bare attention*:

Buddhist meditation takes this untrained, everyday mind as its natural starting point, and it requires the development of one particular attentional posture – of naked, or bare, attention. Defined as "the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens *to* us and *in* us at the successive moments of perception," bare attention takes this unexamined mind and opens it up, not by trying to change anything, but by observing the mind, emotions, and body the way they are. It is the fundamental tenet of Buddhist psychology that this kind of attention is, in itself, healing, that by the constant application of this attentional strategy, all of the Buddha's insights can be realized for oneself . . . This is what is meant by bare attention: just the *bare* facts and *exact* registering, allowing things to speak for themselves as if seen for the first time, distinguishing any reactions from the core event. (5)

By developing mindfulness we can learn to be aware of our mental, emotional and physical states without being caught in them. "In every moment of mindfulness, whatever the object is, whether it is the breath, sensations or sounds, thoughts or emotions, in every moment of simply noting and noticing what's there, there's no reactivity in the mind. There's no clinging and no conditioning, just an accepting awareness of what is present."

Mindfulness is non-conceptual awareness, an impartial watchfulness, pure perception without evaluation, bare attention. It always occurs in the present, in the now. "Total attention includes, never excludes. Superficiality of attention is inattention; total attention includes the superficial and hidden, the past and its influence on the present, moving into the future."

It is the direct and immediate experiencing of whatever is happening , without the medium of thought. It comes before thought in the perceptual process. Mindfulness is present-moment awareness. It takes place in the here and now. It is the observance of what is happening right now, in the present. It stays forever in the present, perpetually on the crest of the ongoing wave of passing time. If you are remembering your second-grade teacher, that is memory. When you become aware that you are remembering your second-grade teacher, that is mindfulness. If you then conceptualize the process and say to yourself, “Oh, I am remembering,” that is thinking. (6)

Mindfulness requires a neutral attitude toward the object of attention, much like a member of an audience watching with interest the performance of a play. “Mindfulness is the quality of mind which notices what is present, without judgment, without interference. It is like a mirror that clearly reflects what comes before it. It is knowing things as they are.”

The Buddha said that we must practice insight to see clearly that which is. To do so we have to first destroy attachment and aversion to the object. Therefore, while being mindful of mental states and matter, we have to be carefully watchful and mentally alert. Developing desireless awareness is the right understanding of the application of mindfulness. It is similar to watching the characters acting in a play. As for the character who has not yet appeared, we do not desire to see him. Similarly we do not desire to follow or hold the characters who are going off stage. We keep our attention upon the character who is acting. Our only interest is in seeing the characters performing the play and not the directing of it. (7)

Mindfulness or pure awareness has been compared to a mirror which reflects what is happening exactly the way it is happening. It is akin to a scientist observing something under a microscope without any preconceived notions – just seeing the object exactly like it is. “The function of the microscope is just to clearly present what is there. Mindfulness need not refer to the past or the future; it is fully in the now.”

Mindfulness is nonjudgmental observation. It is the ability of the mind to observe without criticism. With this ability, one sees things without condemnation or judgment. One is surprised by nothing. One simply takes a balanced interest in things exactly as they are in their natural states. One does not decide and does not judge. One just observes . . . It is psychologically impossible for us to objectively observe what is going on within us if we do not at the same time accept the occurrence of our various states of mind. This is especially true with unpleasant states of mind. In order to observe our own fear, we must accept the fact that we are afraid. We can't examine our own depression without accepting it fully. The same is true for irritation and agitation, frustration, and all those other uncomfortable emotional states. You can't examine something fully if you are busy rejecting its existence. Whatever experience we may be having, mindfulness just accepts it. It is simply another of life's occurrences, just another thing to be aware of. (8)

As the process of mindfulness ripens we slowly gain control over our own attention:

In the beginning of mindfulness practice, we may be distracted or overcome by hindrances. But slowly awareness works its magic. We observe, come back from being lost, begin again, and gradually our mind becomes more accepting, less reactive, and less judgmental. We do not get so totally lost in discursive thoughts. A soft and gentle awareness allows our mind and heart to relax, to loosen, to open. (9)

It is impossible to be mindful all the time, but what is crucial is to be aware of when we slip back to a state of inattention:

Questioner: How can I be attentive all the time? It's impossible!

Krishnamurti: That's quite right. It *is* impossible. But to be aware of your inattention is of the greatest importance, not how to be attentive all the time. It is greed that asks the question, "How can I be attentive all the time?" One gets lost in the practice of being attentive. The practice of being attentive is inattention. You cannot practice to be beautiful, or to love. When hate ceases the other is. Hate can cease only when you give your whole attention to it, when you learn and do not accumulate knowledge about it. Begin very simply.

Questioner: What is the point of your talking if there is nothing we can practise after having heard you?

Krishnamurti: The hearing is of the greatest importance, not what you practise afterwards. The hearing is the instantaneous action. The practice gives duration to problems. Practice is total inattention. Never practise: you can only practise mistakes. Learning is always new. (10)

Some spiritual teachings, such as Buddhism, distinguish a number of levels or degrees of attention and mindfulness:

According to Tibetan Buddhist tradition, there are four kinds of mindfulness. First comes average mindfulness – the attention that springs naturally and spontaneously through our own interest in a particular person, situation or phenomenon. For the most part it's concerned with worldly matters and lasts as long as the interest itself. The second kind is cultivated or generated mindfulness – the type that we intentionally apply to particular objects of awareness in order to stabilize or deepen our understanding of them. This can be considered the general practice of mindfulness: a highly focused and alert presence of mind free from judgment, evaluation, reactivity. The third kind is abiding mindfulness: the well-trained mind is sufficiently tamed to rest naturally, without wavering, wherever it is focused. Accomplished meditation masters

can sustain this kind of concentrated or one-pointed mindfulness for hours, days, or even longer, uninterrupted by distractions. The fourth is Dharmakaya mindfulness, or innate wakefulness, where awareness itself remains undistracted from its own nature. In other words, there is no observer “I” noticing awareness within our consciousness, nor can anything within or outside our consciousness diffuse its energy . . . The fourth and ultimate kind of mindfulness is not acquired through practice. Instead it is already present within us, and we come to realize it as a result of cultivating the other three kinds of mindfulness. As the true essential nature of the mind, it is regarded as being the ground as well as the fruit of practice. The other parts are the growth or the pathway connecting the ground and the fruit. The catalyst for this growth, the force that moves us along the way, is meditation. (11)

The quality of attention can be developed and enhanced. “The development of attention is not linear. As you practise mindfulness, your ability in attention will increase, but it will be clearer and more stable on some days than others.”

Attention is not a concrete object that we can manufacture or reproduce. Attention is an ability that can be developed, just as physical stamina and flexibility can. Attention is cultivated by repeatedly exercising it, just as flexibility is developed by repeated stretching. In meditation, we first exercise attention in a small way by experiencing the breath – feeling the coming and going of the breath in attention. As attention grows, it becomes stronger and can operate at higher and higher levels of energy. As a result, we become progressively more present in our lives. Cultivating attention is like cultivating a plant. Nobody makes a plant grow. A seed grows into a plant by itself when conditions are right. In meditation practice, we provide the right conditions for the seed of attention to grow. We all have the seed of attention already. The seed is natural awareness, or original mind. Natural awareness is present in every moment of experience but is usually obscured by conditioned patterns. For attention to grow, the operation of habituated patterns has to be interrupted, at least temporarily. (12)

Mindfulness is a way of opening our attention to the reality of the present moment. “With mindfulness we explore, moment to moment, the truth of what is arising within our own experience. True awareness is a strength and maturity of mind that sees life without judgment, comment, resistance or holding on.”

Moments spent in awareness and mindfulness are truly lived, while moments spent in repetitive habits and conditioned patterns are not fully lived. “To live, on the other hand, is to be with the beauty of the present moment, to be with the now, the here, the present.”

The present moment, *now*, is the home of mindfulness, not the past or future. “The basic practice is to be present, right here. The goal is also the technique. Precisely being in this moment, neither suppressing nor wildly letting go, but being precisely aware of what you are.”

When you listen to music, you are hearing the present music at that time. You hear the music of the moment. Now is a vast thing. Past and future can't exist without now. Otherwise, without the criterion of now, they cease to be past and future. Now is all the time, and it is choiceless . . . There is always this precision of now, which is there all the time and which helps us to relate with the past and the future. From this point of view, the choices we make depend on how much we are accurately in the now. Conceptions come from either future or past. Somehow they don't apply now. The absence of conceptions is very helpful, and the absence of conceptions also becomes the source of learning, which is now. The minute when you begin to speculate, that moment is already past. Now can only be perceived and experienced, rather than thought of . . . The present moment is really the only thing. It's the one thing, the choiceless choice. (13)

Self-Knowledge and Transformation

Mindfulness and conscious awareness impart a subtle energy with great transformative power. Developing and deepening attention and awareness is a prelude to self-understanding and the ability to live in harmony with ourselves and with the world. Mindfulness is the key to self-knowledge and eventually wisdom:

In the development of wisdom, one quality of mind above all others is the key to practice. This quality is mindfulness, attention or self-recollection. The most direct way to understand our life situation, who we are and how our mind and body operate, is to observe with a mind that simply notices all events equally. This attitude of non-judgmental, direct observation allows all events to occur in a natural way. By keeping the attention in the present moment, we can see more and more clearly the true characteristics of our mind and body process. (14)

The awakened awareness of mindfulness can transform how we live our lives. By exercising more conscious control over our moment-to-moment moods and desires, we can interact more skilfully and compassionately with other people. "The capacity to be mindful, to observe without being caught in our experience, is both remarkable and liberating. With mindfulness we can direct our attention to observe what is going on inside us, and study how our body, mind and emotions operate."

Mindfulness is simply paying attention to what we are doing in the moment. It leads to liberation from the tyranny of the conditioned self and allows our true unconditioned nature to emerge:

Life has conditioned us to create and protect the self, and this habit doesn't die easily. Still, we can begin to let go of this conditioning by paying attention to the behaviour patterns that serve to keep the self intact. With practice, we

can become aware of conditioned responses before acting on them. In Buddhism this is the point of liberation. The moment a thought or desire pops up, we can choose to respond in a way that is different from our habitual, self-serving response. Mindfulness allows us to seize the moment between the impulse to act and the action itself. We can choose to respond in a new and creative way, or we can choose to simply watch as the impulse fades away. Either way we have claimed our freedom . . . Freeing ourselves of conditioning, we become more spontaneous. We may surprise ourselves, as well as those who thought they knew us. The self that seemed so solid and predictable begins to melt, and we become more comfortable with our true self, which is fluid and unfixed. Our own experience confirms that our true Self is no-self, our true nature is no-nature. We are completely free. (15)

Mindfulness shines the light of attention on many of our unconscious behaviours and acts as a transformative impulse. “The practice of attention and the operation of habitual patterns are incompatible.”

As we practice attention, we see the conditioning that runs our lives more and more clearly. We see how our reactions and conditioned behaviors create difficulties and suffering for everyone, including us. At first we are not able to change our behavior, but continued work in cultivating attention eventually opens up the possibility of acting differently. One day, instead of reacting to a situation, we see another possibility and do it. Everything changes. With the first cut into a pattern of reactive behavior, we realize that we can live and function in the world without relying on conditioned behaviors and the self-images underlying them. We live in attention. Now, as soon as we are aware that habituated patterns are operating, we use attention to cut through them and then do what the situation requires. (16)

Mindfulness transforms habitual reactions to the impacts and experiences of life, so that even seemingly mundane events are seen in a new light. The light of awareness slowly changes the conditioned patterns of behaviour that bind us and prevent the flowering of our full potential as human beings:

Subjective reactions exposed to the light of attention and awareness lose their grip on you. They are there. But they lose their hold on you, they lose the power to distort and twist your responses. So observation without any conscious effort on the part of the individual, sustained observation, results in a qualitatively new awareness with which one can live and move. Cook a meal, scrub the floor, wash the dishes, work in the office, meet the situations of life with awareness. (17)

Insight, inner transformation and freedom of choice are the fruits of conscious attention and mindfulness:

Change by choice becomes possible only when we have free attention, a level of attention that is not completely absorbed by conditioning. The ability to act and respond (rather than react) depends on the ability to maintain such a level of attention. Internal transformative work is primarily destructive. Those parts of our lives that result from and depend on habituated patterns will fall apart. In other words, to do this work, we must be willing to die to the life we have known. The essence of this dismantling process is the ability to maintain attention in the face of habituated reactions and not be consumed by them. Therefore, the initial work of internal transformation is cultivating attention, and meditation practice is one of the oldest and most reliable methods. (18)

With the development of mindfulness and conscious awareness it is possible to harmonize with the whole. “There is no need to struggle or be in conflict with what is happening. By bringing a precise attentiveness and quality of openness to the whole range of our experience, moment to moment, the nature of reality will reveal itself.”

The essence of all internal transformative work is original mind – the open, natural awareness that is our human heritage. Conditioned patterns of perception and behavior prevent this natural awareness from manifesting in our lives. Internal transformative work consists of dismantling habituated patterns that cause us to ignore what is taking place inside and around us. Attention is the primary tool. (19)

Awareness itself is the means by which the conditioned, separate self is transformed. Mindfulness moves us from the world of concepts to the actuality of lived experience. “If there is present awareness, fear is seen clearly as an abstraction – a future anxiety born from memory’s blueprint. It is the same with physical and emotional pain. When I cease to own it I liberate myself from its bondage and see it simply as it is.”

If I drop abstraction and move my awareness, for instance, to my bodily sensations, I discover there is a symphony going on. Not necessarily in tune, but nevertheless constantly changing and moving, coming and going. Something arises and then disappears, followed by something else rising to take its place. There is very little that I can control or manipulate. It is immeasurable and unknown, coming into being and then passing away. In the same way, if I let go and listen, touch, taste, smell, or see, there is no way of knowing beforehand the exact quality of those sensations. I could say that I can anticipate the sound of a bird singing, but it is only information based on memory and is neither alive nor vital. The sound I actually hear, the sound of “what is,” will not be the same as my abstraction of it. When I first listen to the sound I will try to grasp it and label it in order to control it. When I let go of that control, there is simply the listener and the sound. When the listener is dropped, there is only the sound. I am no longer there – there is simply the naked and vibrant energy of “what is.” Nothing is needed; all is fulfilled. It is within the very alchemy of this timeless presence that freedom resides. (20)

When awareness is not coloured by personal conditioning, it leads to direct insight and clear perception. “Transformation can only occur with ‘seeing’ the fact. There’s no ‘seeing’ if there is condemnation or justification or identification with the fact. ‘Seeing’ is only possible when the brain is not actively participating, but observing, abstaining from classification, judgement and evaluation.”

That leads us to an awareness without choice – to be aware without any like or dislike. When there is this really simple, honest, choiceless awareness, it leads to another factor which is attention . . . When one is attentive, choicelessly aware, then out of that comes insight. Insight is not an act of remembrance, the continuation of memory. Insight is like a flash of light. You see with absolute clarity, all the complications, the consequences, the intricacies. Then this very insight is action, complete. In that there are no regrets, no looking back, no sense of being weighed down, no discrimination. This is pure, clear insight – perception without any shadow of doubt. (21)

Skilful Living

Approaching life with mindfulness and awareness allows us to act less egocentrically and more skilfully and compassionately in the world. In the words of Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh: “We have difficulty remembering that we are alive in the present moment, the only moment there is for us to be alive. Every breath we take, every step we make, can be filled with peace, joy and serenity. We need only to be awake, alive in the present moment.”

We can nourish a powerful awareness that can eventually cut through our deepest assumptions and help us live awake and in truth. We can find the freedom to choose an action that takes into account the circumstances present at any given time in any given situation – doing *what best serves life*. Taking action that best serves life means to take action that comes out of being as aware as possible of the many conditions present in any situation. It is action based not on our self-centered view of life but one that considers whatever other conditions our awareness holds in the situation. (22)

Mindfulness practice engages us fully with life and develops qualities of wisdom and compassion. “Wisdom is an ongoing process of discovery that unfolds when we live with balanced and full awareness in each moment. It grows out of our sincerity and genuine openness, and it can lead us to a whole new world of freedom.”

[Mindfulness] leads to freedom. It leads to living more in the moment, fully experiencing what’s there, not holding on to it, not greeting things with preconceptions but seeing them clearly as they are. It leads to the letting go of attachments

and therefore less suffering, to less selfishness which means more love and joy, more compassion for other beings and a more gentle flow with what is. (23)

Wisdom and skilful living arise when we fully embrace the reality of the present moment, whatever its nature. “When walking, you just walk. When you eat, you are right there just eating. Plunge your whole life into what you are doing at that very moment and live that way. Whatever you do, whatever the task at hand, your whole life is there at that moment.”

Anyone who has used the moments and days and years of his or her life to become wiser, kinder, and more at home in the world has learned from what has happened right now. We can aspire to be kind right in the moment, to relax and open our heart and mind to what is in front of us in the moment. Now is the time. If there’s any possibility for enlightenment, it’s right now, not at some future time. Now is the time. Now is the only time. How we relate to it creates the future. In other words, if we’re going to be more cheerful in the future, it’s because of our aspiration and exertion to be cheerful in the present. What we do accumulates; the future is the result of what we do right now . . . Right now we are creating our state of mind for tomorrow, not to mention this afternoon, next week, next year, and all the years of our lives. (24)

Mindfulness takes an equal interest in all aspects of our inner and outer life. “It is through the power of mindfulness that we can come to a place of balance and rest. Mindfulness is that quality of attention which notices without choosing, without preference; it is a choiceless awareness that, like the Sun, shines on all things equally.”

Can we make our awareness so inclusive that we’re willing to be attentive to the whole range of our experience? It’s somewhat like going on a long journey in a strange land, a journey that takes us through many different kinds of terrain – through mountains and jungle, desert and rain forest. If we have the mind of a true explorer, when we’re in the mountains we’re not thinking, “Oh, if only I were in the desert now.” And when we’re in the desert we’re not daydreaming of rain forests. If there’s a real sense of exploration, we’re interested in every new place that we come to. (25)

The practice of mindfulness brings a deep appreciation for the simple, everyday experiences of life which become a gateway to the cultivation of wisdom. As Alan Watts observed: “The art of living consists in being sensitive to each moment, in regarding it as utterly new and unique, in having the mind open and receptive.”

Activities such as shopping, answering the telephone, typing, working in a factory, studying in school, dealing with our parents or our children, going to a funeral, checking ourselves in at the maternity department of the hospital – whatever we do is sacred. The way we develop that attitude is by seeing things as they are, by paying attention to the energy of the situation, and by not expecting further enter-

tainment from our world. It is a matter of simply being, being natural, and always being mindful of everything that takes place in our day to day life. (26)

Mindful awareness centered in the present can nourish both individuals and whole societies. “Such awareness can help to free you from speed, chaos, neurosis and resentments of all kinds. It can free you from the obstacles to nowness.”

The way to experience nowness is to realize that this very moment, this very point in your life, is always *the* occasion. So the consideration of where you are and what you are, on the spot, is very important. That is one reason that your family situation, your domestic everyday life, is so important. You should regard your home as sacred, as a golden opportunity to experience nowness. Appreciating sacredness begins very simply by taking an interest in the details of your life. Interest is simply applying awareness to what goes on in your everyday life – awareness while you’re cooking, awareness while you’re driving, awareness while you’re changing diapers, even awareness while you’re arguing . . . The principle of nowness is also very important to any effort to establish an enlightened society . . . When corruption enters a culture, it is because that culture ceases to be *now*; it becomes past and future. Periods in history where great art was created, when learning advanced, or peace spread, were all *now*. Those situations happened at the very moment of their *now*. But after *now* happened, then those cultures lost their *now*. (27)

Formal meditation practice prepares the ground for extending mindfulness and attention to daily life. “There is a real beauty in a truly mindful person: with doing something wholeheartedly, being at one without any resistance. Only when attention come out of unself-conscious doing can there be true awareness.”

The second effort in meditation is to extend attention to daily life outside formal practice. We practice by mixing attention with the activities of life. The intention is to maintain attention as we go about the day. We begin with simple activities such as walking or other exercises and simple manual tasks such as washing dishes and washing the car. We then extend the practice to more complex activities, such as conversation. Step by step, we bring attention to the various activities of life, noting the areas in which we habitually lose attention and fall into reaction. We make those areas the focus of our practice of attention during the day. The work of internal transformation comes alive as the abilities and experiences developed in formal practice are exercised in daily life. We move out of habituated patterns of behavior. What happens, for instance, when another driver zips into a parking spot in a crowded mall just as you are about to back into it? Can you observe the rising of your reaction as the movement of mind, or do you jump out of your car and let the other person have it? (28)

When we develop attention and mindfulness we can engage in life more skilfully, acting consciously rather than reacting to life experiences on the basis of conditioned and learned pat-

terns. "Wisdom is simple. It is simply being in harmony with the here and now. Nothing to gain, nothing to lose. Mindful of the flow, the person is not deluded; their life is in perfect harmony with the natural order."

The more we practice, the less dogmatic we become. All we can do is bring our attention to bear on situations we encounter in life, using attention to cut through the operation of habituated patterns. We show up in each situation, open to what is happening, see what is, and serve what is true to the limit of our perception. We act and receive the result. If the situation blows up in our face, we have to pay. We will see our part in it if, and only if, we have brought all our attention to our action. We do not blame anyone for the result because we know we did our best. Instead, we learn about where we were weak, blind, stupid, or out of touch. There is no other way to learn. Any lesson is cheap if it doesn't cost us our ability to make further efforts in waking up. In effect, we approach each situation as a mystery and know that all we can do is be present, to the best of our ability, in that mystery. We don't need beliefs, we don't need comforting, and we don't need explanations. We can be open and awake, staying present with all that arises in our experience. (29)

Intelligence flowers in the light of attention and awareness. "Intelligence is sensitive awareness of the totality of life; life with all its problems, contradictions, miseries, joys. To be aware of all of this, without choice and without being caught by any one of its issues and to flow with the whole of life is intelligence."

In the fully awakened state there is no separation between observer and observed -- there is only light, peace and clarity. "If you are watchful, never letting a thought go by, then the brain becomes very quiet. Then you watch in great silence and that silence has immense depth, a lasting incorruptible beauty." When the mind is quiet a great sensitivity of perception arises to the totality of life in all its varied expressions. Krishnamurti describes this state in his *Notebook*:

The complete stillness of the brain is an extraordinary thing; it is highly sensitive, vigorous, fully alive, aware of every outward movement but utterly still. It is still as it is completely open, without any hindrance, without any secret wants and pursuits; it is still as there is no conflict which is essentially a state of contradiction. It is utterly still in emptiness; this emptiness is not a state of vacuum, a blankness; it is energy without a centre, without a border. Walking down the crowded street, smelly and sordid, with the buses roaring by, the brain was aware of the things about it and the body was walking along, sensitive, alive to the smells, to the dirt, to the sweating labourers but there was no centre from which watching, directing, censoring took place. During the whole of that mile and back the brain was without movement, as thought and feeling. (30)

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