



Mediation and Contemplation

Session Three

Most of us are familiar with the concept of meditation, if not the actual practice. In its simplest form, meditation is being aware of what is passing through your mind & body during a particular committed period of time ranging from a few minutes to a week or more. It is a personal practice to develop discipline of mind. Why? Well, I'm sure all of us have had the experience of our minds running off in all directions at once - or - running around and around the same track for hours. You aren't trying to stop your thoughts. You are trying to discipline them to focus in the direction you want.

Buddhist teacher, Pema Chodron, described it as similar to teaching your puppy to stay. Each time your puppy tries to get up and wander away, you gently call it back. It's the same with your mind. Each time you notice it wandering off to think of dinner, or a work project, or an argument, or any one of a million possibilities, you gently call it back to the present moment.

Both beginner and long term practitioners use very simple methods to meditate. Focus your attention on your breath counting each time you breath out. Most people count from 1 to 10 and then start back at one. When you notice your mind wander away, gently return to 1 and begin again. Start with 3 minutes and work your way up to a time that feels comfortable to you. Some days it will be easy. Some days it will be very challenging. Don't expect to progress from worse to better. Simply expect to be present during the time you sit.

Contemplation

This is a time to focus your thoughts on something particular. You could take a short prayer or poem, a line you read that inspired you. Read it aloud. Sit for a few moments in silence and see what thoughts and feelings come up. You might write them down. Read it aloud again and again sit in silence to let the meaning unfold for you. Repeat as often as feels comfortable to you.

Why Bother?

We live in stressful times. Meditation and contemplation are two tools that you can use to bring yourself out of the state of stress into a more peaceful state.

