

Practice Note: Being Present for What Is

Transcribed and edited from a short talk by Gil Fronsdal on January 10, 2018

It's probably fair to say that for many people there is a very strong drive or desire or preference for feeling good. That's good in and of itself, perhaps. It can be innocent, and healthy, and appropriate, but there can also be a lot of attachment and complicated assigning of meanings to this idea of feeling good and how important it is.

Some people orient themselves way too much on feeling good and whatever that means. They have some idea that it's supposed to be cheerful, or joyful. There is a pursuit of just feeling good. For some people that desire to be comfortable or feel good takes precedence over a lot of other things. There is not an appreciation that human life involves a range of feelings, some which maybe would not be categorized as feeling good. There may be more profound ways of being present in life besides always feeling good, or pursuing comfort or pleasure.

In this practice you want to be able to be careful that you are not always oriented towards being comfortable, feeling good, or having pleasure in the practice, as if that is the measure of how deep the practice is. The measure of the depth of practice is more from the satisfaction that comes from being present for what is. There is a way of being present for discomfort, for pain, even for feeling bad. There is a way to meet it and be with it where we are not avoiding it, not leaning toward the good, and not leaning toward the bad.

There is a deep satisfaction in being willing to be with what is happening, and say, "I am here in a clear, open, present way to take a good look, to experience this part of life, and then find my way through that to whatever is next." The discovery of the deeper satisfaction comes from really giving time to what is happening, from not being in a hurry to fix it, or make it better in order to make yourself feel good again.

As you practice here this morning, you might consider what your orientation is, and how often you may be – subconsciously even – inclining or measuring yourself or feeling frustrated around this whole complex of feeling good, pleasure, or pain. Can you discover some deep inner sense of satisfaction of how right it feels just to be present for what is as it is? There is some freedom in being able to do that.

And I hope you enjoy the day – even if it's not good.