

Practice Note: Coming To Our Senses

Transcribed and edited from a short talk by Gil Fronsdal on June 20, 2018

One of the little, catchy phrases for this practice we do is the phrase, “We’re coming to our senses.” The senses – eyes, ears, nose, and tongue, etc. – are seen as windows, or ways to experience the world. Imagine that there are windows with curtains. Sometimes we can pull the curtains open, and then we can see, hear, smell and taste. The curtains are probably our thoughts, the things we’re thinking about or preoccupied with. One of the things we can do in this practice is to open the curtains to our senses, so that we can see without the filter of the thoughts, ideas, or preoccupations we carry with us.

Sometimes it’s possible to touch very briefly into a feeling of coming to our senses – being open to sights, sounds, smells, touch, taste, and to the whole inner world of our being – and being aware of them without any commentary, judgment, or interference. It is a feeling of just being open and present in a very simple way.

Some of us can touch into this very briefly before a rush of thoughts comes in. A common thought is, “But this can’t be enough. There’s more that has to happen, or to be figured out, planned, or remembered.” You might experiment this morning with pulling the curtains, and opening the windows of your senses, and just be.

When we do walking meditation, a lot of it is tactile. It’s the touch sensations of the body, the legs, and the feet touching the floor. What is it like to clear the air for a few moments of your thoughts and ideas, as if you’re stepping through a door into a whole new place you’ve never been? It’s so unfamiliar that you have no words, thoughts, concepts, or ideas to go along with it. Just: “Here I am. This foot touching the ground; this breath in meditation; this next moment, whatever it is.”

What’s it like to meet it as if the curtains have been pulled – and the thoughts, judgments, ideas, stories, and evaluations of the mind have been paused for a moment? How do we see the world then?

So, if you like this morning, try pulling the curtains, and see what that’s like. Thank you.