

Practice Note: Confidence as a Support for Practice

Transcribed and edited from a short talk by Gil Fronsdal on February 20, 2013

The practice of mindfulness in meditation is supported by confidence. Some people use the word faith or trust. It is supported by confidence because the mind's attention will go where it has the most confidence.

There is a way in which you can analyze or figure out what you have confidence in by noticing where your mind tends to go. Some people have a lot of confidence in planning because they spend a lot of time planning. Some people have a lot of confidence in fantasy because they seem to spend a lot of time fantasizing. Some people have a lot of confidence in reviewing conversations from the past, trying to figure out a better past. Some people have a lot of confidence in discursive thinking. They are always thinking, thinking, thinking. Some people have a lot of confidence in their emotions because their mind just kind of zeroes in to their emotional life. Every little emotional twitch is of tremendous significance, so there is a lot of confidence in the value of emotions.

Where you place your confidence is an interesting question. What do you have confidence in? In what way can you have greater confidence in mindfulness, in attentiveness, in being present for your present moment experience? Without some confidence in the value of being present for your life as it's being lived, it is hard for the mind to want to be here in the lived experience of the moment.

As you go through the day today, practicing here this morning, you might ask yourself what you have confidence in. Can you evoke or awaken a healthy confidence in being present for your lived experience? As you do walking meditation, as you are sitting, or whatever you are doing, what would give you confidence so that the mind can rest here in this experience, not in yesterday, not in somewhere else, not in tomorrow?

Maybe the idea of confidence can be a support for you as you practice here.