

2005-06-12 Effortless Effort

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SPEAKERS

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Today I want to give you a problem. And always a challenge, something to explore. And that is to explore the interface between that part of our life, which involves are making efforts in that part of our life, which is effortless. That part of our experience which involves effort in that part of our experience, which involves no effort on our part at all. And I think that to explore that interface, with eat will really reveal a lot about our beliefs or assumptions, ideas of who we are, what we think we need to do, and what's not necessary to do. And I think it's exploration is done. Except this exploration of the interface between effort and effortlesslessness can go really far in learning How to live a much more peaceful life. a happier life. So I'm curious to hear from a few of you. What happened is when you did this effortless meditation, noticing what was effortless? Did anything arrive effortlessly to put it all constructed What happened to you? Anybody want to care to say something?

thoughts, stories

So your neurosis neurotic thoughts, the road effort was effortlessly and then within that you were being aware of them arriving effortlessly. You were less caught by them. Okay, thank you. switches and bird noses effortless and How was it for you to be able to just take that in Thank you Marilyn

where you

get really quiet all sudden you realize

you're crushing you're hearing these things.

So for us having things arrive effortlessly meant maybe to be a little bit unprotected and so we're so fearful then just to be that open and available to the what's happens? Very interesting

spaciousness

felt a big spaciousness and got suspended in the spaciousness but weren't Hold on to it, but then she couldn't. What was it like for you to tune into the effortless part of your experience of freedom? How was it different than how you usually are in meditation or you please

expand the space Between the fears

about really opened up space conservation shoulder check. So by not directing your efforts or your attention to the pain, the pain was still there but it was less of a deal. Thank you.

Well, they had sort of the opposite experience, which is that usually when I'm meditating and focusing on some particular

improvement

inside of my own, but when I cleared my mind completely and was not focused

so she's usually focusing on some particular insight or agender thing. When she cleared her mind, then she was surprised to find out their back was sore. And if you'd stayed, I guess if you stayed involved in what you thought was important to be involved in, you wouldn't have noticed.

Yes, please.

Breast normal

I just saw

sometimes it was almost under. So there was lack of kind of, there was simply a certain amount of freedom to something inside of you some part of the inner life to just show kind of flow through you come through you. And some of it was fearful and some of it was pleasant and just kind of float back and forth. What was it like for you to give that kind of freedom to your mind even though you got afraid so an uninhibited mind even though it's unpleasant, is feels good thank you relationship to the sound

sort of like all the sounds for a

car sounds

to say oh well

there's all sounds are allowable, there wasn't a judgement about the right sounds or not right sounds are pushing some away, just just arising. So there's the joy of being without preferences boss

The boss left

the judgments right and wrong and it's pretty expensive to do that. Maybe your boss is ready to retire. Give her a Golden watch. Thank you Thank you for your service. So why is this a problem that I gave you? To look at this interface between effort and effortlessness? Why is it a challenge

for me is being able to be effortless. What I noticed in mine was that if I was effortless, I was fairly relaxed, but then the effort would come in. And there was a point where it's like, no, I had to have effort to be effortless. No, just relax. Don't bring in the judgments. And so mine was just an ebb and flow of effortlessness and an awareness that I'm not effortless and just trying to have an effort to let go

to just laugh or to let go. Good. So less suffering to be present but an effortless way to some of the tragedies or difficulties in permanence as a life. Yes. So is it less effort to maintain status quo of your conditioning? And then if you want to be free of your conditioning, maybe you have to do some kind of effort to get over the hump of that and find something else. It's a good question. Other questions? Well, the challenge is what's what's the juicy, juicy stuff? What's the challenge about looking at this interface between effort and effortlessness?

When you when you talk about that,

I immediately thought of love

and

the immediate sense of the effortlessness of maternal love

and the

fullness of other

forms of love or what I'm calling love in my life, whether they are

people material possessions, and even those differences, I was struck by.

So when I talked about the interface between effort and effortlessness, she was mainly thought about love, and how she called maternal love, maybe paternal maybe parental love, certain kind of love, can seem seems to rise effortlessly is there but other forms of love, seem to involve effort and effort was part of it. That's an interesting distinction. Yeah, What's wrong with that? You want to get someplace? Oh, yes of course. So did it she that's today was difficult because she was sleepy, just sleepy. And so for her to get anywhere, you have to be even do the exercise you have to kind of make effort. But the challenge I have for her is that you know, maybe there's something profoundly wise about falling asleep if you're tired. Why not? So, the challenge is, why not just go? Why not just go with what is when I go with that flow, as opposed to find it or think it should be different part of the challenge of efforts and effortlessness this has to do with challenging our ideas of what we think is supposed to be happening.

Once the juicy things for me was to notice my eyes opened before it ended and noticed people with different listening when

you could, you could see people listening.

You all feel different. She said that she opened her eyes just before the end. And that the way people look to you all of you looked was very different than you how you normally look. I guess. I was listening to the quality of something special.

Just see people were listening without

looking at a room.

I think that

question

So Audrey says the more we can attain a certain kind of effortlessness, the less suffering you'll be. Yes. Do I put effort into it? To lay back? Too much for

energy doesn't work in concert.

Okay, so a little bit more about why you don't see a difference or grasp the difference between effort and effortlessness. Maybe it's not maybe there's no need. Just like to see how it goes. Maybe something a bubble up later. You feel a need. You feel a need. You feel a need. The interesting experience. Yeah, okay.

The

relative of a close relative of this little exercise an effortless and effortless effort and effortless. This is a meditation practice called choiceless awareness, where the person makes no choice about where attention is directed. So you don't direct your attention towards the breath or towards the body or towards sounds or anything equally direction, but rather the awareness just open. And to let whatever comes, come on its own effortlessly. And for some people, that's very challenging. Because some people have such a strong momentum of always being the agent that directs the show, always being in charge and always trying to make something happen. And sometimes in the spiritual life, some people invest a lot of importance in it. And it is important, so it's reasonable enough, but it's a lot of slaving whenever, you know, it's too much importance. And so you got to do something in order to be spiritual in order to get someplace. And the idea of giving up the doing is not fun. Whereas a spiritual life I have to be you know, I'm not doing it then you know, so you Not doing it, then what's going to happen? And it's a choices choices choices approach is also very challenging can be very challenging to some of our beliefs, some of our self identity of who we think we are thinking we have be in charge, and some of our fears, because sometimes being in charge being directed in our attention is a way of creating, protecting ourselves from things we don't want to look at. Occasionally, I meet people who will use mindfulness as a fortress. And they can be so mindful that they can actually can't let anything in really, and that happens sometimes it's very rare that I meet but I have met a few people like that. Number one, meeting one person who used the noting that way, it was a mental noting, and he was getting mental notes all the time, day and night just so that so he wouldn't have to face himself. Just keep keep keep present and so that you know, so what is it okay just to kind of float on what arises effortlessly. Is that okay? And if you take the premise temporarily that it's okay, then it's very interesting to notice. The moment we feel is not okay. No longer safe is not appropriate, not not in this area, I have to now start applying effort. I have to engage that's a contract that I have to do something rather than just kind of let something move through me. I think a lot of this points to trust, the ability to trust or have confidence in one thing, I think in our innate intelligence know if you sit quiet,

you're relaxed.

Then the full functioning of our psychophysical beings still gonna, you know a lot of us open and operate. No one's telling you to stop thinking, stop being creative and stop feeling and stop, you know having ideas that kind of bubble up through. When I was went off to college. I was 18 my father who's a university professor took me aside and gave me some advice about how to study at college, how to get involved in college, work. When you get to college. Go find a park bench near the library and just sit there until it occurs to you that you're interested in something

knowing something

And then go into the library, go into the library and read about it. That was the instruction, I got to go to college. And so here's a person, my father had a lot of confidence in kind of the effortless or innate

intelligence that there's curiosity then arises, and that curiosity, you know, will, you know, you want to fall through and it takes some effort to get to the library and the book, the books and all that, but it's a different quality of effort than the effort of, you know, rushing off to the, you know, kind of, you know, to this looking at the schedule of classes and pondering the rest of my life and what's really important to my career and I'm going to set myself up properly and how bright professors to get so I get good grades and, you know, and just figuring and, you know, and strategizing and bearing down, that's a very different approach to you know how to do it. So Can Can we trust? What happens if we trust our innate intelligence, the intelligence, the thinking, the figuring the want the movements of the mind, which happens on its own effortlessly, as if what arises effortless means may be enough. And maybe you'll find yourself in situations where you don't know what to say because the effortless mine, it doesn't occur. effortless might say anything, doesn't have a good reply or a good rejoinder. So, you know, maybe you tell your companion, nothing occurs to me. You know, and because in the innate mind, you know, you're not just reaching or stretching the mind or what I say you have to figure out something to say. I once had a very profound spiritual kind of experience. In the presence of another person is another spirit a spiritual teacher. And it was pretty far out experience until I got self conscious that it wasn't saying he was I wasn't keeping up my end of the conversation and then a contract that he came back. Well

that's the way it goes. Yes. So

she said when she says when you sit when she sits down to meditate and she's worrying, she makes an effort to, to, to be able to deal with a word so she can get to a place of effortlessness. So behind that strategy, which is a reasonable one, I'm not saying it's, it's wrong, it's great. It's a pretty reasonable approach. But behind that strategy, there's probably some judgment about what should and shouldn't be happening. It might be interesting to try. If you get bored after a while, you probably stopped worrying. And, but, you know, as a gentleman up there said, there's a quote, maybe you will say it again.

Concentration participation.

But this practice, because

worry are scattered

thoughts.

I try to focus on the breath. So that's an effort, you know that I've read and heard those instructions popping back

out all that stuff that just keep coming back to the breath. And this

is for me, so I have

some level of concentration,

right, which is

it feels like a different project.

Right. So yeah, you should notice that I did that exercise a guided meditation at the end of the sitting right in the beginning, partly because if we did it cold, just the beginning of sitting, you probably want to be as settled as you were near the end. And it helps to have a settle mind to do this. His mind just scattered up runs off all the time. You never hear, you have to be here some degree. But, but if there is a lot of agitation in mind a lot of activity in the mind or the worry or whatever, if it's possible.

It's

there is there is this place of being the observer or the watcher watching the mindful. That is out of the flow of the worry. But it's okay with it, just let it kind of arise and pass. It's not in it. So this is what you were saying at the beginning of the question as to the discussion period, where you notice your erotic thoughts, and they're just there as usual. However, the difference was it now you're somehow not in them, and you're somehow apart. It was more, I guess, more freeing or peaceful or, you know, so So, is there a new way to relate to your worry that you don't have it doesn't involve changing and getting rid of it, but Stepping out of its current and then and then not making it a problem do you think it'd be nice? Yes.

One of the situations when it comes to effortlessness, and one of the ways

sometimes

you just exhaust yourself.

Yeah. And then that sometimes sometimes spiritual life, it's just, you know, you butting your head against the wall spiritual wall, you know. And so you know, just exhausting yourself and finally I just kept thinking, this I can't do it anymore and that's when The door open. So one of the interesting questions here also is around effort is, what is the belief that supports or is behind the effort you are making? If If, can you question whenever you see yourself making effort, it's worth clinic questioning looking what what am I believe? What's the belief behind it? And I'm not saying it's wrong to make effort. effort is beautiful, I love making effort. But, but this particular challenge of today is to look at this

world of efforts effortless to see what you can learn from it and be challenged by it. And one way to do that is to start questioning the beliefs That's according the African

trust.

Suppose

Sometimes

this situation

are we supposed to go through life making no effort? I think that there is also effortless effort. And so that innate intelligence that's within us, sometimes prompts us to do things. So you're walking down the sidewalk and, and, you know, some the next few trips, you know, it's kind of teaching the person up, help the person that's making effort. But that effort that's doing something arises out of this effortless, you know, it could be very different. Place it could arise out of a kind of erotic place. Oh, that person fell by don't think this up this this person helpless person nothing I think I'm a bad person and even tell everyone else how bad I am. I better make a good show of how I'm helping this person up. And yes, yes yeah i'm not i'm not saying at all today that people should necessarily live your life always out of effortless.

I think it's

but I think there's something very powerful for exploration, that's why today I was offering a problem and answer. I think there's a problem to explore here really use this use this tool, question of effort, effortless, as a little kind of bomb that you've dropped into your mind. So, you know, to really kind of clear up the question things a new way. What's going on? You're doing that. Sorry, I love I love your question. I don't really, really feel like want to give an answer, except that. I think that there are people who find themselves in great tragedy. And some people respond, some people don't. But there are examples of people who respond, and they I don't know where it came from my response. I don't know how I did it. I don't know where it came from. But it just seemed, this is what has to happen. And I just did all this stuff. I dashed into burning buildings and pulled the people out there. I never would have done that in my right mind. But somehow that situation just cause something for so There are times I think when there's a tremendous marshalling of energy. We call enter effort, the energy activity, to respond to the tragedies of difficulties of the world. I think we do a disservice to ourselves, not to respond. But the question is, what kind of heart? What kind of mind do we respond with? And do we respond with a mind that feels mistrustful of who we are in relationship to it? Or do we respond with a heart of mind is trustful of how we can be in relationship to it? And if we're trustful, maybe it's okay or respond? How are we going to respond? is appropriate. So, I'll tell you a story from Friday. When a Mexican police chaplain someone told me, we were told the story of an officer, you know, you know,

fits along. Sometimes you never know what the right responses And sometimes you you face tragedies and you don't know what the right thing and so many different ways of responding one one example from that one story from Friday was this man was going Chuck was going around to different rooms, hospital rooms. And he was told there was a woman with Alzheimer's, who there was no communication possible with her. And it wasn't told to go serious or to see other people but he went by her door so I'll go and see her. So he went in and encouraged him to play music. And at initial initially tried to have a conversation with her and it was it was incomprehensible what happened. But then he played music for her for about 15 minutes, 20 minutes, something like that. And then after that, she relaxed and start asking him about his musical instruments. And, and then, you know, coherent conversation for a little while. And so somehow just occurred to him that that's that response to music, you know. And then another example was a chaplain being asked to go down to the emergency ward because they're really often chaplains are often hospital chaplains are often asked to go to the emergency ward for some kind of tragedy deal with something. But this time, it was a school bus accident. And there were 15 kids all came into the emergency room at the same time. And 15 kids is too many to go around to see them all. So with a chap so what's the right response to that thing? And so somehow it occurred to the chaplain to go sit in the nursing station and meditate quietly in the chair and middle of the kind of center of emergency section and, and maybe not passive What's this? SP pre passive should be out there doing something doings where it's alive, right? And he sat there for two hours in meditation, and later, the nurses and doctors came up and explained that that was really great because we were rushing back and forth between different rooms. And every time we passed you, it was a calming influence, it really felt helpful for us to know someone was praying for us. So I gave you those two examples, an attempt and an attempt to try to explain that sometimes. We don't know what the appropriate responses in different situations and sometimes the effortless place if we allow ourselves to kind of go there. Sometimes it's the most creative one. And sometimes sometimes the wisest one. And sometimes once that effortless occurrence, this, you know, idea has arisen, maybe then, there's a kind of effortlessness and applying a lot of energy. It's not being passive. It's just being in some sense. No, maybe.

unsatisfying.

So, you know, I sit here and so my effortless mind, you know, concerned about wanting to say something, it's helpful. Yes. And one of the areas to explore around that is to explore the idea of who's making the effort. And often the idea of effort, we will be making effort is connected since of will sense of purpose sense of self. I'm the one who's making the effort. And the effortless place is sometimes much more easily identified with it, as, as not coming from the self, your self image or self representation and so on. Are we willing? Can we use appropriate sometimes to allow something which is not our normal self identity to be the motivator for what moves through us and what we want to do? Yeah.

Authenticity, personal choice.

So the question is, you know, he says it's a question of authenticity and nobody sits to to work out when we allow the most wholesome, most complete presentation of who we are in the art of our authenticity. And what some people will say some spiritual teachers say is you can't help with being complete. And if you just relax and let the left the, the effortless world does show itself, that that's, that's enough. It doesn't have to look complete in order to be complete. It is what it is. And then what I what I've seen over and over again, is that when we allow ourselves allow the effortless world to move through us, without trying to control or limit or direct what's the show is that it's not a fixed thing, but it's a process. And that process has its own laws and patterns and directions that it wants to take. And, and as long as you know, it's kind of a faith statement, but If, if we're watching if we're present as opposed to involved, if we're if we're kind of not an occurrence we're kind of standing on the shore watching in the sense that that that changes the nature of the process and changes such a way that the process is health health producing moves towards freedom. So I saw your hand first name was maybe stop

was hard his concentration as

three

for me, I should really need to work on my concentration

really wonderful.

I don't know, maybe there's a lot of wisdom to develop in concentration. And there's a lot of wisdom to having a directed meditation practice. There's a lot of wisdom to me directed life at times and making that effort. I'm not I'm not holding us up is the right way to be, you're the right spiritual practice to do. But I thought it was interesting to offer this as a problem to help clarify aspects of your life. And then maybe helps you helps you make you know, the our variety of ways of practicing and more variety of modes of being and that in different times different things are appropriate. And, and so sometimes it's really the appropriate thing is to develop concentration. Hopefully, it's the effortless mind. The innate intelligence says, Oh, you know, I think I need to develop more concentration now. And so, okay, I'll do it. As opposed to some shirt, you know, great Buddhist authority says, you know, in order to be a good person you need to develop concentration. Did you kind of see Oh, this is what this is, this is what's helpful. This is what necessary. This is what's useful right now. And I teach a class in concentration practice, right? So I think it's very helpful for people.

So

sometimes in circles are teaching this kind of teaching on choiceless awareness or effortless kind of awareness is taught at the end of a 10 day retreat, you know, it's not, you know, it's once there's a lot

of stability person has developed certain level of concentration, presence, skills, self awareness. So it's kind of a little bit understood a little bit of an advanced practice.

So,

you know, please don't go home and think that this is, you know, you're supposed to be good at this automatically or this is it. But really what I don't I'm not even offering this as a practice for you to do. What I'm offering today is as a problem. As a problem, the sense that we help you help you accelerate mindful exploration of yourself and what goes on and what motivates you and how you do things and what you do and the kind of effort you make and questioning the effort you make questioning other ways of being and, and that was the intention of the talk. And

so

now you have a big problem.

But yeah, don't worry about it. Thank you.