

2020-09-16 Mindfulness of the Body (3 of 5)

Embodied Joy

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SPEAKERS

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When this topic of the week mindfulness of the body yesterday I pointed out to one of the benefits of mindfulness of the body is a sense of protection and safety. It's a wellspring of being ethical. It's hard to hurt, intentionally hurt other people, harm other people, if one is really centered in one's body, because then one has the information, the experience of how that's also harming ourselves. And that there is another way to take care of ourselves, take care of the world, doesn't require us to harm anyone.

Today, the emphasis is that the emphasis on mindfulness of the body provides also a means a way to experience some of the greatest joys and happiness a human being can experience. That it's through being embodied, that we release and open up to the wellspring, the reservoir, the capacity, to experience embodied joy embodied happiness. That is really spectacular because of how embodied it is. It feels really full and complete. And it can feel very stable, very satisfying, because there's a satisfaction in all our muscles and all the marrows of our bone, as opposed to just kind of a mental excitement and mental joy and mental happiness. That might come more from evaluation or getting what we want or getting praise or something is exciting for us or interesting. Nothing necessarily wrong with that, but to discover the capacity from within. This is what what the Buddha said what was so radical in the for the Buddha.

When he taught in ancient India, there were plenty of religious traditions in his time, that really mistrusted any kind of embodied physical sense of joy and happiness. They associated with sensual pleasure which was kind of a trap for attachment. And the Buddha, who saw understood the trap, the problems of clinging to sensual pleasure, discovered a non sensual, embodied sense of happiness and well being, that can well up from sitting quietly meditating. And in a modern world who might say

that as we get concentrated and settled and peaceful and stress begins to fall away entirely, and the body's very relaxed and we keep being kind of more cautious. situated just under breathing, or just on something here, that it releases endorphins, or releases some kind of chemicals in our body, that bring up a lot of sometimes quite intense sense of joy and happiness.

We might say that, but that, to me seems very reductionistic. And seems like it misses the point of the deep embodied sense of well being, contentment, satisfaction, that can well up in this kind of meditative happiness and joy, that really, there really kind of comes to its own when we have the capacity to be having embodied mindfulness, where there's a receptivity in the body for this to well up. And as I said earlier, that the, I think it's fairly revolutionary for our modern world, that this happiness that the Buddha advocated, is happiness doesn't to harm anyone. It doesn't require using a lot of resources, a lot of money to get the things that get pleasant experiences to do exciting things. It doesn't require receiving praise from anyone or adulation becoming famous. It doesn't require you having power, the pleasure of power, some people are addicted to it the many of the normal places people are looking for happiness and well being. So often cause more suffering than you do happiness, not in the short term, sometimes in long term.

And it's not to be critical of those, but to to have access to a deeply embodied kind of internal sense of well being and happiness, some of the greatest kinds of joy and even ecstasy that's possible in meditation. That doesn't require anything outside to be different doesn't require money and you know all the other things. It's considered to be harmless for the world around us. And to have that as a wellspring of meaning of purpose, to understand how deeply satisfying it is, how meaningful it is, gives a life a sense of a life of purpose. And it leads to a life of service that leads to a life of caring and compassion, and freedom. So it's not a selfish happiness. And it can't be selfish because selfishness actually squashes, this free flowing wellspring of joy and delight that comes from the inside. And that's why it's such a revolutionary act.

For some people to begin experiencing this wellspring of meditative joy is because it requires a reorientation certainly away from conceit. A way from narcissism and some people have, but also a way from a self preoccupation with self and self identity and, but rather a willingness, a receptivity to allow kind of like a life force to well up and move through us. Rather than being in the control tower, trying to control it or be it or prove it or apologize for oneself or show off oneself or define oneself or justify oneself to, to put all that kind of selfing aside and trust this welling up of this goodness, the status, peacefulness that's possible here. And talking about this, and also in that, guided meditation I did, very aware that this is not really meditation for someone who's brand new to meditation and I offer it here, partly as a continuity of all these months of offering the 7am sitting with the hope that little bit the continuity, the background of all that we've done so far, creates some kind of foundation that makes this little bit accessible. What I'm talking about here, it doesn't have to be ecstasy, doesn't have to be dramatic, but to learn to turn our attention inward, and begin to be receptive to be allowing to, to be attuned to the feelings of pleasantness of lightness of satisfaction of contentment. That might start

as little hints. But as we breathe and open and settle more, it becomes bigger and stronger. It does require a mind which is undistracted, it requires a mind that doesn't feel the space of attention with its preoccupation because there has to be room in our attention, the attentional field for this embodied experiences to surface and show themselves.

And it's may be useful to think that our attention only has certain amount of bandwidth. And if we fill it with thoughts, and memories and stories and conversations, that gives very little bandwidth leftover for a body. In fact, probably it's like zoom where if you have too much bandwidth is being used, something begins to freeze. And you're not really kind of keep going.

So to quiet the mind enough to allow this lived experience, and some of you maybe had the experience of doing exercise, like going for a really nice walk and someplace outside and maybe a nice cool day or something. And just feeling the vitality flowing in the body, the blood flowing the vitality They just feel so good to feel the body, all the energies of the body just flowing. And, and there's a kind of deep satisfaction with those energies flowing. It's kind of like those, it's related to that that begins to be released. When there's a lot of relaxation and alertness. When this we begin really the revolution of re-centering ourselves on the lived experience from the inside out as it flows and moves through us. And there's a different degrees, different characteristics of this pleasure, the sense of well being, that can welled up from the inside.

But the reason to talk about it here in mindfulness of the body week, is that the more we can be embodied and practice more, be attuned to our body and make a habit and they're familiar with experience of a body. The more benefits that come from it. Certainly if there is pain, which are some oftentimes can be pain and discomfort in the body. There's a way in which mindfulness of the body can be phenomenally supportive for that can allow us to respect it and find a way through it, and find our peace with it. But also mindfulness of the body really allows, makes room for, this meditative joy, the capacity for inner joy and well happiness to well up and come come forward.

So I didn't know about this when many years when I first started doing Zen practice, because in zen meditation, it was actually kind of discouraged or kind of seen as a little distraction to have a meditative joy and happiness as part of practice. And maybe there's orientation in that tradition sometimes to see that he kind of leaning into it or opening to it as a kind of attachment. A kind of departing from just kind of the ultimate connection to truth which maybe sometimes Zen is supposed to emphasize. And so but then when I was introduced to vipassana practice, it was then that I began to appreciate that this meditative joy and happiness, that can well up. Not only is it allowable, but it actually begins opening the door for greater and greater letting go. And as you open up more and more and get more and more settled in the present moment, wonderfully, the joy fades away. And then with a joy fading away, there's a deeper sublime form of happiness embodied, deep satisfying feeling that wills up. And then with time, that happiness fades away. And rather than it being a loss, it's really a fantastic gain, because it's very deep. Deeper, more satisfying feeling of peace tranquility, equanimity

kind of replaces it and to be so at home, so feeling so not in conflict, so not challenged by anything, but feel this beautiful feeling of peace kind of flowing in here that also at some point fades away and it fades away into a deep letting go, deep release. And that deep release then allows us to touch, tactile touching, of freedom of liberation.

So, this joy and happiness that the Buddha emphasized, is not meant to be an end to itself. So it is not to be attached to it, but certainly to allow for it to be receptive to it. Allow to grow and develop, so that it can keep morphing and transforming as the practice deepens into happiness and peace, and then freedom.

So mindfulness of the body. May your body be your friend, and you feel that your body is here really to support you and that has these treasures inside, that if you take the time and give some of your attentional bandwidth to you can allow this deep healing and deep freeing of these positive emotions and feelings, deep, deep and deep within. So thank you very much and we'll continue tomorrow.