Meditation

Angela 2 — Week 1, Day 2, Session 1 — 28 minutes

Summary: Before the formal sitting, Russell says meditation is not separate from the rest of life, except for a still posture. He invites innocence and curiosity about what it feels like to be alive. In the sitting, attention moves through the body and breath, returns from stories, and stays with the eyes open.

Introduction

I'd like to say a few words before our formal sitting begins.

So first, from the point of view of this practice, sitting here before meditation is not significantly different than after the bell rings.

The picture that somehow there's meditation and then there's not meditation is different than the way we want to approach it.

The main difference is that in the formal practice, we're maintaining a position. To the best of our ability, we're having a kind of stillness in the physical body.

Of course, there's breathing and there's a lot moving, but there's a stillness in terms of the general spontaneous or habitual movements that most of us make. So that there's a kind of background against which we can observe what occurs.

But besides that, our direction is to be awake in our life. And our direction in our sitting is to be awake in our sitting. So it's really not so different.

So when we're sitting here waiting for meditation to start, sometimes I think that's the best time.

The inner atmosphere I'd like to encourage this morning is a quality of innocence, a quality of just real curiosity. What does it feel like to be alive?

In a real, kind of unknowing, discovering kind of atmosphere, as if it's not just your same old body and your same old mind repeating the same old stories, but a sense of — huh, what's it like to be alive this morning?

And as much as you can, to welcome what arises and return to present moment.

Sitting

I wish you a good journey.

[Silence 7 minutes]

Drop down into your bottom. Feel your weight on the cushion, in your seat.

Notice your right foot, what it's touching.

Notice your left foot.

Sense the whole contact with the ground and the support that's underneath you.

Notice the length of your spine, the upward movement of your head, the top of your head towards the sky.

In the middle, sense your hand. Sense your right, your left.

Notice any temperature sensations in your —

Notice if there's any sense of the breath, deep to where your hands are.

[Silence 8 minutes]

You notice that you're lost in a thought or a story?

Take a moment to sense that. How that's alive in your body.

Without dwelling on it, just feel it for a moment and come to the next breath.

Bring your attention down, down, down into your bottom and into the breath.

Letting that story drift away, letting it go.

[Silence 5 minutes]

Let your eyes be open, at least letting a little light in.

You're gazing maybe a yard or two in front of you. Not dropping your head, just lowering your eyes.

Sleepy, you can open your eyes wide.

We want to learn to sit with the eyes open.

[Silence 5 minutes]