

You Are Not Meditating for This Morning

The quiet you find sitting still is not the reward. It is a path being cut, so that on the day you cannot go looking for it, it can come and find you.

Most people quit meditation for a reasonable-sounding reason. They sit for twenty minutes, notice that they are still a bit anxious, and conclude that it is not working. The mind did not go quiet. Nothing happened. Twenty minutes gone.

I understand the disappointment, and I think it comes from measuring the wrong thing. You are judging the practice by how the twenty minutes felt. That is like judging a morning at the gym by whether you enjoyed the last set.

So let me put the useful objection first, because it is a fair one: if a practice makes no difference to how you feel while you do it, why do it? And the answer is that it does make a difference — just not principally then, and not principally there.

Start with what is physically happening. You sit up so the spine comes straight out of the hips, as though an invisible string were tied to the top of your head and lifting. The chest opens slightly, the shoulders fall back, and the lungs get the room they need, so you are not fighting your own body to breathe. Then breathe in through the nose for four, and release out of the mouth for five. In is energy; call it prana, call it Shakti, call it Holy Spirit, call it air. Out is the cleaning. Inward cleansing, outward release.

Do that for a while and you are not just relaxing. You are sending a message. The body is an animal, and it takes its instructions from conditions, not from opinions. A long, regular, unhurried rhythm of breath is the single clearest signal available that there is no emergency. You are announcing internally that we are okay, that consciousness is on the job, that you are safe and held in your own being. The body believes the breath long before it believes your reassurances.

“And in your moment of most need, when life is at its hardest, the space will find you.”

TIM O. DAVIS

But the real work is what accumulates. Every time you sit, you are cutting a path inside yourself to a specific place — the quiet space, the inner room where connection to source is actually possible. The first time, that path is bushwhacking. The hundredth time, it is a track your feet know. You are conditioning yourself, in exactly the way that anything practised daily becomes conditioning, and the conditioning is the point.

That matters because of when you will need it. Nobody sits down and meditates properly in the middle of the worst hour of their life. When the mind is loud and you are dysregulated and

your whole sense of being is disturbed, there is too much noise to feel any connection at all, and you will not be able to go looking for the quiet. This is why the practice has to be built in good weather. You are not doing it for this morning. You are doing it so that on the day you cannot go and find the space, the space can come and find you.

And it does. Something hard happens, and before you have decided anything, you have already taken one long breath. The floor is under your feet. There is a gap where there used to be only reaction. You did not summon that. It was built.

There is a second thing the sitting quietly dismantles, and it is bigger than stress. You will notice, as the body relaxes, where you have been holding standards. The Four Agreements calls it domestication — the accumulated conviction that there are conditions you must meet to be acceptable in this world. Most high-functioning people are carrying an enormous amount of it, and it shows up in the body as held tension long before it shows up in the mind as a thought. Let the breath go there. Let it make peace with it. The point is not to argue with the standards. It is to notice that who you are is your choice, and that limitation was never the arrangement. God did not build churches and orders and philosophies so that you would feel obliged to fit in a box. The kingdom is within you — every tradition has its own version of that line, and every version puts the relationship in your hands.

Which is what a daily practice really is. Not self-improvement. A meeting you keep. Your one-on-one with source, which nobody can attend for you and which does not require you to buy anything or wear anything or believe anything in particular. Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, the Koran — whatever rings true for you is who you are meeting. The sitting is just how you show up.

So stop grading the twenty minutes. Some sittings are beautiful, some are restless, and both lay the same track. In the middle of a hectic day, when the Leela — the sport of life — starts to get rough, close your eyes and breathe for a moment. Watch how quickly the peace arrives. It arrives because you built it.

THE PRACTICE

Sit upright, string at the crown, and breathe in through the nose for four, out through the mouth for five, for ten minutes — regardless of how it feels. Then once during the day, in a hard moment, close your eyes and take one of those breaths. That is the path being used.