

LEARNING TO *news*

Occasional Reflections on Living

Fall 2007



I hadn't worked too hard promoting the event. With holidays underway and weather turning sunny, I didn't expect many people would be interested in passing a Saturday afternoon learning to meditate. It's conventional wisdom, really: People do other things through the summer. Thus, while I had decided to go ahead with this offering, I didn't expect much participation.

From the first day posters went up, however, this wisdom was turned on its head. "I'm very interested," an elderly voice announced on our answering machine. A woman with a heavy English accent called after seeing something in the newspaper. Emails arrived saying, "I'd like more information" and "I want to sign up." My anticipation people would be doing 'other things through the summer' was proving wrong. I was surprised.

If we reflect on our lives, we will all see ourselves doing this sort of thing again and again. Each of us almost always assumes how events are going to unfold. The weather, our schedules, what we'll have for dinner, when we'll get bed - we almost invariably meet these with expectation in close tow. 'It's going to be this way', we tell ourselves. 'It's going to happen like this.' But do we ever *really* know what is coming our way?

Look at something as simple as meditation. The practice involves sitting down, placing our attention on the breath, and returning to this whenever our mind wanders away. It seems pretty straightforward, dull perhaps. If we consider our actual experience, however, there are some surprising discoveries to be made.

The breath can never be found in exactly the same location, for one thing. Sometimes it's right at the tip of the nose. Sometimes it's more obvious in one nostril than the other. Sometimes it's further back in the nasal

passage, and sometimes we have to go elsewhere - deep into the belly, for instance - in order to find its rhythm.

Beyond this, the breath's character shifts from day to day, moment to moment. And what pulls us away as we sit differs from this breath to that: plans for the afternoon, then thoughts of last week, then an ache in the lower back.

Similarly, what waits for us upon our return from composing a shopping list or readying a reply to our boss is as varied as trees in a forest. Sometimes we find the smooth as silk breath itself; sometimes another thought is waiting to jar us away; sometimes there are feelings of anger, irritation, boredom. One thing for certain, no matter how sophisticated our attempts at prediction are, we never truly know what we are going to find when we sit down.

In the same way, we never know what is going to occur when we arrange an appointment, schedule a dinner, or pick up the phone. All our lives are actually a long series of moments we cannot fully anticipate. Sometimes we get close enough in our predictions to think we know what is going to occur. But we never really do. Life is much further beyond our comprehension than this. Our lives are more mysterious than this. Life, in truth, is not at all the ordinary, predictable, run of the mill occurrence we so often make it out to be.

So I've got this workshop in a few days. I've already been shocked by the amount of interest expressed. I am not, however, certain how many people are going to actually show up. I've been trying to guess a number all morning long. Going through my list of contacts, I've been thinking this person felt like a given, that person not so much. About an hour ago, though, I just threw up my hands. I have no idea who will actually show up when Saturday finally rolls around. No idea. Knowing at least this, I will just have to wait and see what happens. It is all I can really do, after all: just wait and see.

Kick Start Your Meditation Practice

September is a month of returns: to school, to work, to routine. As a result, I invite you to return to meditation practice with a special workshop/coaching package. This covers attendance at the Sept 8 and Oct 6 *Ocean View* gatherings, and includes four coaching calls in the weeks between these. The cost is \$245 plus GST. If you have yet to do an introductory workshop, the cost is \$260 plus GST.

Meditation and coaching are a powerful combination. Make use of this opportunity and kick start your practice!

Meditation Classes and Workshops

Fall classes and workshops are now in place. These will occur at Gordon Head Rec, Monterey Centre, UVic, Oak Bay Fitness, and Shoreline Community School. Check the 'Meditation' page of NeilMcKinlay.com for 'Coming Events.' Several workshops will happen at Queenswood:

Sat Sept 8 • Sat Oct 6 • Sat Dec 8
1:30 pm to 4:00 pm
Queenswood Centre 2625 Arbutus Rd
\$45 covers the workshop,
a guided CD, a yoga strap, a booklet and GST.

Continuing/Weekly Class at Monterey

This Fall, Monterey Centre will be offering a weekly meditation class for anyone who has completed an introductory event with me. Sessions will focus on the practice of meditation, while allowing some time for instruction, discussion, and questions. Details are:

Wednesday Oct 3rd - Dec 5th
7:00 pm to 8:00 pm
Monterey Centre • 370-7300

Ocean View At Queenswood & Home

Open to anyone who has completed an event with me, the *Ocean View Meditation Group* deepens our sense of the meditative tradition presented by Chogyam Trungpa and Reggie Ray. The main group gathers at Queenswood Centre on the mornings of the above workshops (Sat Sept 8, Oct 6, Dec 8). This group will also come together for a 'Full/Half Day of Meditation' on Sat Nov 10. As always,

an email will be sent out to everyone on my 'Meditators' list a few weeks in advance of each event.

Satellite versions of this group also occur in peoples' homes. If you have friends, family and acquaintances who are interested in meditating together, please get in touch.

Two New Workshops

Fall will see me offering two new workshops. Though both of these arise out of my ongoing engagement with meditation, each does so in its own unique way.

Simplify Your Life - Many of us are so overwhelmed with duties and possessions that finding time to meditate is challenging. It is, in fact, near impossible without making an effort to lessen the speed and weightiness of our lives. In *Simplify Your Life*, attention is given to the causes of our harried lifestyle and to practical suggestions for addressing these.

Monterey Centre • Sept 19th • 370-7300
Gordon Head Rec • Sept 20th & Nov 15th • 475-7100
Shoreline • Sept 25th & Nov 20th • 386-8367

Parenting and the Spiritual Path - It has been suggested that our parenting years offer heightened opportunities for spiritual growth. In *Parenting and the Spiritual Path*, this truth is affirmed as we are helped to connect with the transformative power of the time. The workshop encourages us to explore and embrace the spiritual richness of family living.

Royal Roads • Dec 1 • 391 2600 (Ext. 4801)

What Can I Do?

If you live in the Victoria area and have yet to move your plastics recycling beyond the blue-box, check out www.pacificmobiledepots.com. This company offers an ever-expanding range of plastics recycling services and regular pickup at locations around the city.

Thanks

Bob Howell, Ty Chandler, Robin Cantor, Gord Butterfield, Bruce Cox, Peggy Cady, Gord Shipway.