

LEARNING TO *news*

Occasional Reflections on Living

Winter 2006



My daughter wanted a jam sandwich for breakfast. 'Easy enough,' I thought. First butter. Then jam. Then another slice on top. "Here," I said, holding the result. Samantha gave it a cursory glance. "I don't like crusts, Dad. Mom cuts them off."

I went back to the kitchen with a shrug and started slicing darkened crusts from the rest of the bread. When I returned to the table, Sam was again unimpressed. "Could you cut it up, please? Like this," she gestured, slicing with one hand. "Into four, then?" "Yes," she nodded. "Four."

This time, I arrived at the cutting board with a sigh. Looking at the clock, I suddenly felt the pressures of time weighing on me. We had a lot to do before the day got underway. "There," I grumbled, putting the plate down. "A jam sandwich. No crusts. Cut in four." "Thank you," she said, taking a piece into her mouth.

"Dad!" she soon burst, fueling my growing frustration. "You put butter on this?!" she accused. My hard work was now hanging in the air in front of me, dangling between two fingers. "I *hate* butter! Mom..." I interrupted. "Mom never gives you butter, right?" Samantha nodded. As if to add emphasis, she stuck out her tongue and said, "Bleah!"

Wanting this episode to end, I snatched the plate, took the quarter sandwich from Sam's hand and rushed back to the kitchen. I stuffed the rejected creation into my face while reaching out for fresh slices. Jam, butter and bread crowded my mouth. Quite habitually, I reached for the butter tray and wiped a thin layer on the first new slice. "Aaaargh!" I screamed. Bread crumbs flew everywhere. I placed both hands on the counter and leaned into its support.

"What's wrong, Dad?" Samantha asked. She had a slight smile lifting her mouth. Some concern wrinkled between

her eyes. "What's wrong?" she repeated. And then: "Is my sandwich with no butter ready?" I let out an angry breath.

'Wrong' was the fact that nothing was following my agenda. I had felt relatively on top of the day when I had woken - or, more accurately, when I had *been* awoken. Things were going well as I prepared that first sandwich. In other words, things were more or less following my plan.

But if there is one thing I have learned since our daughter arrived, it is that life doesn't often follow my idea of how it should proceed. And when it does, this doesn't last long. Lacking the niceties of most adults, children really drive this home. Where someone older might have put on a good face and eaten that sandwich, Samantha took a different approach. "Bleah!" she exclaimed.

Which points to the second thing I've learned since our daughter's arrival. I am not all that flexible when it comes to my agenda. Once a plan is established, cement pours in and this becomes the way things *must* go! And when they don't - well, the above offers a sense of what happens then.

Standing in the kitchen that morning, staring at the mess I'd made, I felt bad for my immovable ways. 'My idea of how things should go is only an *idea*,' I thought. 'The practice of life involves engaging what's actually happening.'

With this in mind, I reached for another slice. I spread the jam, pressed more bread on top and got to cutting. By the time I placed the result in front of my daughter, I wasn't feeling particularly good, but I had relaxed a little. I thought I was more prepared to roll with life's inevitable punches.

"Here you go," I said, putting down the plate. Sam looked at this for a moment. "Thanks, Dad," she then said, slipping out of her seat. "But know what? I'm not hungry anymore. Come on - let's play!"

The Workshop-Coaching Package Revisited

With workshops and classes happening at so many different venues and under so many different financial arrangements, allowing folks to apply their fee against a four-session coaching package is becoming increasingly complex and uneven. To simplify things, anyone now taking a meditation class or workshop with me will receive a 10% discount on an initial four-session coaching package.

This package is highly recommended for people wanting to make a deeper connection with their lives and with the practice of meditation. Conducted by phone, the one-on-one format allows us to address various issues regarding technique and practice. It also gives us ample opportunities to engage the crucial task of folding a meditative perspective into daily life. The results this service has earned so far have been impressive.

Coaching-Meditation Intensives

One of many things that's striking about the coaching I've been doing is how people utilize the service. One client recently used a four-session package as a vehicle to increase her daily meditation practice considerably.

Regular interaction about the practice of meditation can provide a powerful container for our journey. It can intensify our experience and engagement, and deepen our process considerably. If such a possibility interests you - perhaps as a way to ring in the New Year! - please be in touch.

And please remember, coaching is not just for meditators!

Learning to Swim Sale

As life takes me further from my days as a swim coach, I spend less time promoting *Learning to Swim: Reflections on Living*. Copies still remain in storage, however, and it would be nice to have these out in the world as intended!

To help this happen, I'm putting the last stock on sale. From now until inventory is exhausted, Canadians can order *Learning to Swim* for \$15.95 including postage and GST. Go to the 'Books' page of my website, print the order form, adjust the price and mail the completed document to me. *Christmas orders must be received before Dec 8th.*

Meditation Classes and Workshops

In the next months, I will be offering numerous *Learning to Meditate* workshops. Check the 'Meditation' page of NeilMcKinlay.com; 'Coming Events' gives more info.

As always, several of these events will take place at Queenswood Centre. The dates and details are:

Sat Feb 10th • Sat Mar 17th • Sat Apr 21st
1:30 pm to 4:00 pm
Queenswood Centre 2625 Arbutus Rd
\$40 covers the workshop,
a guided CD, a yoga strap, a booklet and GST.

I am also facilitating a few ongoing classes through the winter. These will take place at Gordon Head Rec Centre, Monterey Centre, UVic and Shoreline Community School. Again, see 'Coming Events' for details.

Ocean View Meditation Group

Recognizing people often want to continue exploring the practice introduced in classes and workshops, the *Ocean View Meditation Group* has come into existence. Open to anyone who has completed an introductory event with me, the *OVMG* seeks to deepen the role meditation plays in our lives and enrich our understanding of the unique tradition presented by Chogyam Trungpa and Reggie Ray. More has been added to the 'Meditation' page of my website.

At present we will be gathering at Queenswood Centre on the mornings of the above workshops. That is, from 9:30 am to Noon on Sat Feb 10th, Mar 17th, and Apr 21st.

What Can I Do?

Check the place of origin for all the goods you purchase. When an easy alternative exists, buy the product that is created closest to your home. This small gesture reduces transportation-related consumption and emissions.

Thanks

Bob Howell, Laurel Saunders, Dianne Dennis, Janella MacNab, Winona Pugh, Jenny Rhodes, Pat Adam, Gord Butterfield, Gord Shipway, Gary Dobson, Lisa Ruta, Ty Chandler, Ellen Sherck, and Lyn Geiger.