

**NEWSLETTER**  
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THOUGHTS ON MEDITATION

Perhaps for some trainees meditation comes easily. For me it never has. I suspect that this is true for others. I am no expert on meditation, but I have learned a few things over the years that might be useful.

The first and possibly most important of these is to persevere, just keep going. Don't worry about not knowing what you are doing. Something inside of us knows how to meditate, and the more that we continue to be willing to try, the more we will get in touch with that something. In the meantime, we should just follow, to the best of our ability, the meditation instructions that we were given at our orientation. Those instructions will help to point us to that inner knowledge and to give us guidelines along the way. This process will probably take some time. So we should try to drop our judgments of how well or poorly we may be doing, and just be willing to try to do our best.

There will always be times of discouragement. Depending on the kind of person we are, there may be many of these. There may also be pleasant times, times of boredom, times of discomfort, and so on, depending on our emotional habits. Meditation does not cause these feelings to arise. Meditation simply helps us to see what is there, within us. And what is there, within us, are the habitual "colored glasses" through which we view the world; the habitual emotional tools with which we try to deal with the world. Some of us tend to habitually react in angry ways to whatever happens to us. Perhaps for some, *anger* would feel too strong a word: perhaps the words *resentment*, or *frustration*, or *righteous indignation*, or *irritation*, or *bitterness*, or *impatience* would feel more appropriate. Or perhaps we might recognize in ourselves tendencies toward fear, or confusion, or arrogance, or despair, or ...

These feelings can seem very important. In fact we often base our life decisions on them. During Serene Reflection meditation, we try to just allow the feelings to arise and allow them to pass; not holding onto them or pushing them away. We try to be willing not to get involved in them. This begins to give us the perspective and experience to not allow these feelings to control our actions—of thought, word, and deed—when we begin taking meditation into the activity of daily life. They are just feelings and if we allow them to control us, we will simply continue to be the same person with the same problems that we have always been, except that as we continue to allow them to control us, the habits—the feelings and the problems, etc.—will continue to grow stronger.

There are some feelings that we may have fewer problems putting into perspective. Hunger or tiredness might be examples of this. When they arise they present information that can be useful, e.g. It's time for lunch; or, Now is not a good time to start on a project requiring much concentration and dexterity. We learn through experience that we can choose not to dwell on these feelings when we find that something more important needs to be done. And doing this may not be particularly difficult. Anger, or fear, or despair, or lust, etc., however, may well seem somehow different. These can feel much more difficult to simply disengage from, while we try to get on with what needs doing. Through the perspective of meditation it is possible to come to understand that these are also merely feelings that one can choose to go with or to let go.

In my experience, the only way to change our problems is to change ourselves; and the only way to change our problems "for the better," is to change ourselves for the better. One of the benefits of an ongoing willingness to meditate is that it helps to see what needs changing and to learn how to do that changing in a positive, Preceptual direction.

If we want to make progress in our meditation practice, we need to meditate regularly, preferably every day. How long for is not so important. This is one area in particular where the

Priory's support can be invaluable, in establishing and maintaining that practice. It helps to have the encouragement of others doing the same thing, as well as someone to talk to about problems that might arise. If this is your wish, I hope that you will join us.

Rev. Rokuzan

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