

The Ecology of Consciousness

When our limited truth is expressed and heard in the space of complete listening, it loses its power to control us. That's how transformation happens.

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Entering the Stream

I want to welcome you.

We come into this life as babies, helpless, needing food, protection and love. And for many people that's most of their life. But eventually there is a doorway we may come to, one way or another, and at that point we realize that survival is not all that life is about.

For our animal nature it is; we can't really deny that aspect of ourselves. It doesn't work, to deny our humanity—our physical body, our emotional heart, our mind—even though they may give us trouble, or be difficult to manage. Truly our body is our vehicle. Our body, mind and heart are vehicles for our aliveness, our spirit, our presence; our true Self.

So we get to that doorway, and maybe we go through the doorway and realize vastness, or the infinite, the unknown; the mystery. There are many names to describe that realization, that discovery, that opening; that beginning on the path.

Of course not everyone who discovers that opening goes through the doorway, or continues on that journey. As I was saying recently, it's like Frodo going to Mordor—it's a rough trip! But once we've been called, there's no choice but to climb the mountain—not to is no longer an option. You're fortunate, actually, to find yourself at that point. And the question then becomes, how do you find the support to finish the journey?

Fortunately, support is available. That's the good news. And we also learn how to take care of ourselves along the way. That's really a big part of it—learning to take care of ourselves. And because our mind wants to understand what's happening—the mind's nature is to want to understand, to make meaning, to organize—we often draw conclusions and develop beliefs about what is happening, and these beliefs frequently become obstacles to the journey.

So we learn how to return to the mystery of not knowing. This is not the same as ignorance; rather, it is wisdom, to surrender to not knowing. And when you find the truth that you are, when you actually know it as *being knowing*, or *knowing through being*, that's the surrendering, the guide, the teacher, the teaching and the path, all in one.

And by learning to trust, you begin to find that trust through the heart. Not the

emotional heart, but the big heart, the heart of vastness. Not the heart of clinging or of need, from which we, as babies or animals, normally function; but rather through that doorway, the big heart, the heart of fulfillment, the heart that *is* fulfilled. And we trust, because the nature of that heart *is* trust, is acceptance. This is not a practice, not something you have to learn. It's already...it.

So we begin to trust that, and it takes us, it nurtures us along the way. But then we go back through the doorway, we go back into struggle, into identification, into projection. Until it hurts too much; until we learn to let go, learn to allow the transformation of fire to alchemize us from lead into gold. That's all. That's what is really meant by being true to oneself in the deepest sense. Not true to one's self as ego, but true to one's own truth.

Part of how we learn to take care of ourselves on the journey is by having an attitude toward our struggle that allows it to be fully experienced. I'm not talking about acting out, but about being with the arising of attachment or reaction without drawing conclusions about what it means—that's the tricky part. Because as soon as we identify our struggle, as soon as we give it an identity, we create more separation, and thereby keep the struggle running—and running us—unconsciously.

So the simplest instruction is to get out of your thinking and into your feeling, however painful as that might be. And often it can be very painful, or emotionally cathartic, or intense. And of course the baby, our human nature, wants to be comfortable, and we have a culture that places comfort on a very high pedestal. It's a very fine line, a very subtle distinction.

It requires experience to really trust the process, because it continues on and on. People awaken, and then go back into identification and ask themselves, "how come?" Or they have an experience of awakening, and think, "I want this all the time. How can I have this all the time? How can I become free? How can I become free of my struggle?" Or the emotional energy can be such that it can become despairing: "It's never going to happen," they may tell themselves. "I'm going to keep having to go through this same old stuff, over and over again. It's never going to end." It can be very discouraging, to the point of despair.

So it requires in some ways a tremendous *will* to be free, to stay with the process. And even as one progresses along the way, it often gets more intense as one becomes more conscious. You feel things more deeply, you become more sensitive. It's not worse, necessarily, but it is more vivid.

So coming together like we're doing tonight is very helpful, because it creates an environment of support, where we in a sense become reacquainted with the truth of ourselves, and may be even imbued with more of that presence through our being together. That really does help. And when we get together for longer periods, like on retreat, the opportunity is heightened in some way, deepened.

It's really a pleasure to be with you, I have to say that; a great pleasure. Monday night is kind of a funny time to make it over here to this spot, but I have to say I'm glad you did, and I'm glad I did. It's nice to have a forum where we can, in a comfortable, intimate environment, really explore truth together. I don't really think about what I went through to be where I am in this moment. All that kind of drops away. The years on the zafu, the many, many years on the zafu. And all the pilgrimaging around the world, to teachers and so forth. And the extraordinary longing to be free. The intensity of that longing.

Q. Could you say more about this vastness that gives you comfort?

Jon: Do you know what I'm talking about?

Q. Yes, I know what you're talking about, very much. That's why I wanted to hear more about his vastness that gives you support. It seems to be as you say, once you get going you can't get into it, and you think you want to quit. But all of a sudden you find out, kind of like an addiction, you can't quit. In other words, there's only one direction to go, and that's forward. But it's not fun anymore. I've heard about the Dark Night of the Soul, but that sounds like one night to me. In reality it goes on and on.

Jon: Yes. Yes, I know. It's important to be able to feel, to be able to *be* the feeling. Not just to feel, but to *be* the feeling, whatever that is. In this moment, it could be sadness, or fear, or anger. The covering could be emotional. And the emotional realm is very often the doorway to the bliss of vastness. We often think, "I don't want to feel the grief, the anger, the disappointment, loss..." But we're human beings, and these are all part of our experience. They really just are, and there's nothing wrong with them, and there's nothing wrong with us. They don't mean anything about us, they're just what we go through.

So when you're having a hard time, when it's the Dark Night of the Soul, what *is* that feeling, and can you *be* that? We want to be the bliss. We want to be on the other side of the door. But the only way to be on the other side of the door is to become the door, become the resistance, become the suffering, the pain; whatever it is. The frustration that we're not free. We want the goodies! But...we are the goodies, already. It's already

done. Freedom isn't something that we attain. When we drop that which we're not, we discover we already are That. Follow me?

Q. Yes, I do, very much.

Jon: You do, I can feel it. So actually there's nothing to do, except to be with what is, as it is, in the moment.

Q. But you feel like you're causing your own suffering, that's so frustrating...

Jon: Yes, it seems like that. But the truth is that it just perpetuates itself. And the thought about it actually keeps it going. So it's almost like you have to backtrack to the center. It's easy to get out on the surface, which is judgment, analysis, comparison; it's the head energy, mental energy. It's really external, it's way out there. It's not here, it's not really the truth. So then we backtrack, we go "Oh-oh, I'm feeling uncomfortable," or agitated or whatever.

So the trick then is to drop that label, drop "I am feeling agitated." Drop the I, and all there is *is* agitation. The energy of it. The feeling of it. The pain of it. That's all. Not, "Oh, I'm really doing it now." That instruction, if you get it, will take you all the way. It absolutely will take you the whole way. It's the hardest thing to get. Because you have to *keep* getting it, over and over and over again.

And as you move more into vastness, everything is "yes". You know what I mean? I don't mean be a masochist; this can easily be misunderstood. Rather, it's that you know who you are, you're familiar with that, you're steeped in it. Learning to let go is really learning to feel completely the holding on. To allow yourself to *be* 100% holding on, is the only way to be 100% letting go. It's a paradox. Otherwise we keep the holding on going with our thoughts, with our judgments, with our analysis, our conclusions.

And then we move into not knowing. Sure, you can play with your mind; it's fun. Byron Katie, for example, does a mental thing to unhinge the mental thing: "Is it really true? Am I really my own worst enemy?" You can challenge any of your beliefs. The truth is that our beliefs are not true. They're beliefs. Beliefs are not true, and they're not false; they're just beliefs. They're useful or not useful. They're functional, like software. They're functional, or they're dysfunctional.

You're very much here. I'm glad you're here. Really let yourself feel even the difficulty. The sadness. As we become less armored, we may think "I have to be strong, I can't be weak." Or we may feel vulnerable, feel emotion; and then there is judgment. Not for

everyone, but for a lot of people.

Q. You keep asking yourself, do I have what it takes?

Jon: Yes, and you can also ask, is that really the truth? Remember, you are already It. You don't need anything. It's not like you have to have something to get through. I understand what you mean, "Will I be able to hang in there?" Maybe. It's a valid question—nobody knows the answer to that. And there may be real pain there. And there may be fear or sadness or grief about that: "Will I be free?" But "I" never gets free. "I", the ego, is the antithesis of free. Freedom is already done. It's already what we are.

Q. But not wanting to be the pain, not wanting...

Jon: Be the not wanting. Be the not wanting. That's where we miss it—it's completely unconscious. We're really focused on the bullseye, the goal. And we think the not wanting is motivating us, but in fact it's preventing us. It's actually the obstacle. It's very tricky. And once you get out of your head, you'll get it. Each time, you'll get it. And every time you have to keep re-getting it. People can't believe they have to keep re-getting it. "How come I forgot this?" And gradually you get that that's part of the process, you just forget it. And you just keep remembering.

When you're in a transmission process like this, it activates that which is holding back. It brings it to the foreground, usually. People think, "it's so intense, I don't know if I can handle this." But you just take as much as you can take, that's all. And then distract yourself for a while, turn on the TV. Surf the internet. Whatever! Take a break.

It's similar to exercise; one of the most important aspects of exercising is not-exercising. Taking a break. Not overdoing it. But we go, "Oh no, I've gotta get enlightened, I've gotta sit on that zafu 24 hours a day 7 days a week until I'm enlightened..." Hey, I was there. I'm just glad I didn't tear the cartilage in my knees. I definitely paid a price for all that, but, hey, I was young. A lot younger, anyway. But a lot of my friends did wreck their knees, and their backs. They did a lot of damage to themselves physically, trying to get enlightened. It was ignorance. They just didn't know. Nowadays, we can sit in chairs. You don't have to sit in a full lotus, torture yourself (unless it's comfortable to sit like that, of course). Some of the first people I studied with actually believed that if you didn't sit full lotus you weren't going to get enlightened. Talk about a limiting belief!

Q. What is waking up?

Jon: Waking up is what you are. Waking up is the distinction, the conscious distinction,

between suffering and freedom. Before waking up there is no consciousness of freedom. It's a concept maybe, but not experience. Waking up is the taste of truth. Waking up is not enlightenment; waking up is only the taste, or glimpse of the truth, of the possibility, of what can come to fruition. But as an experience it can be very powerful, very moving. It can completely change one's life, to have an awakening. Or it can be avoided, and pushed to the side, and not followed through on. By going back into identification, into just being comfortable, we might not necessarily go forward. There's no guarantee of going forward.

Intention is probably important, but ultimately I think it's really a non-choice. In other words, suffering simply becomes unacceptable. You're just not willing to suffer anymore—even though you do! This is different than wanting to be comfortable; wanting to be comfortable avoids pain, seeks pleasure. Wanting to be free, on the other hand, dives in through the pain.

It's ongoing work to pay attention—not just when you're meditating, but all the time. Yes, meditation is great. It can be very helpful—not necessarily in all cases, but for some people it can be. For others, though, it's just another way to stay in denial. To go to sleep. Whatever. But you're awake! And there's still the stuff at the same time, right? So, can you allow yourself to experience that conflict?

Dive totally into this moment. Don't distract yourself. Cut out all the distractions, every one of them; cultivate one-pointedness. Nothing less than that is going to work for you. It's right in this moment I'm talking about, not tomorrow or whenever. You can feel it; you just felt it. Right now. That's it. You're distracting yourself with all the stuff.

That's why in meditation practice they have you follow the breath, to cultivate one-pointedness. It's not attention; it's complete surrender. It's what Poonjaji used to talk about, being completely still. That's it, being completely, 100% still. And what happens is that you get the presence, but the heart is blocked, and that's where stuff is going to be moving. And if you don't want that, if we avoid the pain that's in the heart, the mind can really go on a trip. It really gets on a treadmill, fueled by the pain that's not being felt. The mind will give you every reason in the world not to be here. It will try its best to figure everything out—that's what it does.

So whatever you're feeling, right now, be that, without drawing conclusions. Even if there are conclusions, just let them go on in the background. Don't give your attention to the conclusions; give your intention. Give your attention to This, that's what intention means. This is intention, right now. One-pointedness is intention, that's what it means. It's not a concept in your head. That's not intention, that's willpower.

And that's ok at the beginning. A little willpower, no problem. Or you use willpower when you need it. Like a hybrid car; it can switch systems. For instance, you need a little willpower to get yourself here on Monday nights. Right? Once you're here, you can let go of that willpower. But if you're always in willpower, then you're stuck.

The good news is that you're not unconscious. You're familiar with this truth that you are. That's the good news. The human experience that needs to be traversed as a result of that is a very important part of the journey—it can't really be bypassed. We're emotional beings, we're sentient beings, that's what that means. We're feeling, we feel. We live in a culture that's top-heavy. Too much in the head—information overload. We have to get down, into the body, into the heart. That's what's important. Otherwise the mind is a torture chamber.

Let yourself be the feeling.

Letting Go

How is it possible to let go? If we're always moving forward; always going somewhere; how can we let go? And what are we letting go of?

Often when you stop for these forty minutes, if out in your life you've really been going relentlessly, you just fall asleep. You just kind of go under. The body *needs* to go under; it's just been going, going. So we learn to stop, we learn to actually stop the forward movement. That's what meditation is a useful tool for, just basically stopping; consciously stopping.

When we're always moving forward, we can't be aware of what's unconsciously being held on to. Because we're thinking, and planning, and doing... Being somebody... Taking care of business... I'm always amazed what a relief it is to stop. Even in the midst of unbelievable demands and activity and responsibility, an ever-lengthening to-do list. The only way to let go is to bring into consciousness that which is unconscious. It's very dirty work!

So when we stop, of course what is unconscious begins to emerge into consciousness. And often it's not very pleasant, particularly when it's physical—the tensions that we build up through our coping mechanisms, the ways we get through the day. So historically a lot of physical culture has been developed in spiritual circles. Yoga, tai chi, aikido, the various martial arts; healing practices, breathing practices, qigong. They're all based on meditation, really; they're all based on stillness. Stillness that's conscious, that's held not rigidly, but soft, open, balanced.

I think in the West we've mainly contributed the psychological, the psychodynamic. The individual, psychodynamic psychology—that's the area that's most unconscious. The belief structures, the mental conditioning. That's probably the most dangerous landscape that we eventually must traverse, must encounter. Of course the emotional is really the gateway to the heart, to the big heart, to the unnamable; the infinite consciousness that we are.

Usually we stop feeling by thinking. We separate from feeling by analyzing or compartmentalizing, by the ways we define things. The mental realm is very often mostly a defense mechanism. So of course in so many traditions, wisdom is basically equated with *not* knowing.

Of course here in our culture, in the information age, knowing is King, it's God; it's what's rewarded. Not knowing is unthinkable. It's radical, it's subversive. And of

course, ironically, it can't be understood intellectually. Not knowing isn't like dumbing down, or being stupid; that's not what it is. It's really more like the wonder of a child, or a tourist in San Francisco on the cable car for the first time. Ever seen what people look like on those things? Like a dog with its head out of the window and its tongue blowing in the wind. Everything's new!

Actually, I've lived here most of my life, and I'm always amazed, driving around the city, at how I always see something new. Always! I mean just in terms of buildings, architecture, it's like, "Oh, I never saw that before!" Happens all the time, it's just amazing to me. There is a sense of appreciation of beauty, because there's nothing compared to it; perception is right now, it's not related to something else. That can only happen to a mental process.

Not knowing is really seeing directly what is. It doesn't mean understanding it or intellectualizing it. It doesn't mean comparing it or analyzing it. It means perception, direct perception of what is. That's all that's really required, completely. Whether it's physical awareness, mental awareness, emotional awareness—that's all that's required. Seeing things directly as they are, feeling them directly as they are, hearing them directly as they are. So you could come here and listen and not understand a single word of it, that's fine. Just hear it, just as it is, and let it be. Try it out!

We assume we understand when we're listening and talking to somebody, when in fact we're reacting, making assumptions, projecting, and we don't even know we're doing that. People often end relationships with false assumptions—have you ever done that? It's much more interesting to try on not knowing. Of course that doesn't mean we're not going to react, as long as reactivity is still present. But we can be available to the contraction of the reaction.

What does that mean, be available to the contraction of the reaction? I mean, you're talking to someone that you know, and all of a sudden they say something or they do something, and all of a sudden your body clamps, your stomach gets tight, or you have a headache, or you're angry, or afraid, or sad, or something. Some physical reaction, maybe a combo. Right? You know what I'm talking about. There's a reaction.

So then what? That's what's important: then what? Where do you put your attention then? Do you just move further into unconscious contraction, the wanting to get away from it, to distract from it? Become more unconscious, in other words? That's usually what happens. And we don't even realize it until we're very tired. It takes a lot of energy to cultivate unconsciousness, it's a very heavy, very exhausting condition. And maybe for awhile, you think you're holding on, holding on to something. And maybe

you're at work, and you can't really break down and cry, or whatever. Because you've got to deal with your responsibilities, and they expect you to be professional, and so on.

So you go home and say maybe I'll sit a little bit, I'll just tune in. Or you come here, and want to tune in a little bit, maybe amplify the conscious channel. That's what we do here, or on retreat, we amplify the conscious channel. Or in meditation, that's what we're doing, we're turning up the volume of consciousness. Of course, it can be a little difficult until you get the hang of it. People think "well, I meditated five minutes this week, meditated one minute last month. That's about all the consciousness I can take right now! Too much on television I need to catch up on, too much news; there's a lot to keep track of!"

There is a lot to keep track of, no question about it. But consciousness creates space; it creates time and space, actually. It's really kind of miraculous to discover that, to find that out. How is that possible? I don't know. But it does, you should try it. Cultivating consciousness actually creates time and space, and reduces stress. I think we've all had experiences of it, you probably know what I'm talking about, though I may not be saying it in the way you language things.

You know the feeling you have when you're on vacation, and you don't have to go anywhere, don't have to do anything? That's a good feeling, isn't it? The pressure's off, no one's going to bug you or want something. There's a feeling of no pressure. That's a good feeling. And that's what I mean! Developing consciousness creates that feeling of no pressure—even when there's so much to do. That's the weird part. In some ways nothing has changed, and in another way everything is different.

So you begin to live as spaciousness. You begin to live in the timeless. And the timeless has a sense of lots of time; I mean all the time you need. And the mind, the mental activity, becomes a very compassionate, friendly ally. I think most people would settle for that. Forget enlightenment; just have a mind that you get along with, that would be...not bad, you know? I'll tell you how to do that first. First things first, as my mother used to say:

When in doubt, feel. That's all.

Mental torture happens because something hasn't been felt. It's the surface siren, the car alarm. That annoying thing that goes off when you're trying to sleep (if you live in San Francisco, you know exactly what I'm talking about!). So instead of going out and smashing that car with the alarm, go in and feel. Because the torture is a mental alarm; the obsessed, unhappy mind is the result of emotional energy that has not moved, like a

weather system that's been trapped. It's dangerous; it can cause physical illness, can cause all kinds of destruction. So, when in doubt, feel.

Then, once the feelings have been felt—not analyzed, not understood, but felt—then the energy has moved, and the mind usually becomes calm, becomes quiet. And after a while the mind really likes it. Because it doesn't have the job anymore, it doesn't have the inappropriate job description, which is "figure out the feeling". That's not the mind's job. The mind can't do that job. When the mind tries to do that job, it doesn't work, it just creates more torture. You know what I mean?

Feelings can't be understood, actually, not if they're to be really, fully felt. Because they're just feeling, they're just energy. We try to understand them, and that clamps and stops the flow. This is really important. Remember we talked about living and not knowing? For the mind to be happy it has to be unburdened of what it cannot deal with, what it cannot control, what it cannot understand. And it cannot control and it cannot understand feelings, period. Now, after feelings have been truly felt and the energy field is clear, then the mind can do whatever it wants to do. It can do all its little analyses, draw its conclusions, and so on. But now there's no energy in it, there's no charge anymore; so it's fine, it's not a problem. But when that charge *is* there—it doesn't work.

So after a while, once you've begun to feel rather than think, the mind becomes much more comfortable, becomes much happier. It actually begins to enjoy itself! And then it can work in its realm, which is thinking and planning and all the things it likes to do. It figures out things it can figure out. It likes doing that. It likes making lists, playing with computers, and, you know, fun stuff. It's playful. It creates things, invents things, discovers things. Fun! The mind is wonderful, absolutely fabulous.

We've been trained to not feel. We've been conditioned to repress and judge and deny feeling. So we have to learn how to feel again. And when we've awakened to consciousness, to our true nature, to that which we truly are; when we've awakened to that, then we have a great deal of support for feeling, for transforming the mind and the body and the heart. And then we have a deeper refuge, you might say.

And what you'll find is that when you're really feeling, when the feeling has cleared, you will be more in freedom, more in the presence of true self. That's how you know! That's the feedback mechanism, the biofeedback loop, if you will, that will let you know. If not, then you've probably gone back into your head, and have been trying to control, and figure it out, which is really a very tricky little defense mechanism against feeling. But when you have access to the so-called spiritual, the presence—when that's

present, it's like the difference between DSL and dial-up. Much faster! Like a direct line. When you learn how to use that, it's like rocket fuel.

But you still can't bypass your own stuff. Often people have awakenings and they think, phew! I'm done! I don't have to meditate anymore, don't have to keep looking at all this painful stuff. The mind then comes up with all kinds of conclusions, which are usually wrong, and you find that out eventually. But if you stay conscious this very process can be really useful. You might say it's the ultimate cooker. We're an amazing ecosystem, you know, this whole psychospiritual, bodymind-complex, infinite unknowable mystery that we are. Pretty far out stuff. Pretty far out to explore. And I like that.

I often say that I find the useful attitudes to have are those of explorer and scientist. Explorer: like you're in unknown territory, you've never been there before, don't know where you are. And scientist: simply observing things as they are. Being very attentive, watching very carefully, and not with a preconceived idea. All the great scientific discoveries were made by people who were able to think outside the box. They were not caught by the paradigm of thinking that was around them. They were able to see things nobody else could see because they didn't have preconceived ideas about what they were seeing. All the great scientific discoveries have that in common. Thomas Kuhn wrote a book—he was a professor at Stanford, I don't know if he's still around—he wrote a book called “The Structure of Scientific Revolutions”, and he talked about that, it's very interesting. And the same is true in our own transformation. That's what I've been talking about tonight.

So I guess the question that I have for you is, what do you want? Why are you here, or what are you looking for, what is it that you need? Start there. That's the only place we can always start, where are we right now. What is it you need right now, or what is it that you want?

The Mirror

Lately I've been beginning the talks with silent interaction, which is the deepest form of teaching. One way or another, it's a mirror. A mirror of emptiness, or a mirror of struggle. Comfortable or uncomfortable.

How do we relate to the uncomfortable? Or to the comfortable? Usually we relate to the comfortable—or the ego relates to the comfortable—as "I want more"; "I want more pleasure." And that's ok! What's wrong with wanting more pleasure? That's human nature. That's built into the hardwiring of our bodymind structure. And obviously we don't want struggle, we don't want discomfort; and that's why we seek. That's why we seek freedom, or the potential for freedom, from suffering. Suffering's kind of a bummer! We try all kinds of ways to avoid it, and we have many ways we *can* avoid it. We're endlessly creative in that way. But ultimately we realize that we can't avoid this anymore. It doesn't work! But we'll keep trying. There's gotta be a way out of this. Right? So we try, and try, and try.

This is a very old subject, actually. It's been around for centuries, at least in the literature. In Zen, for instance, there are all these stories about the student saying to the teacher, "if we're already enlightened, if there's no attainment, then why are we meditating? Why are we practicing?" And even today that's an issue. I don't know if you're familiar with that subject. It's actually an important area to look at. It's very easy to get confused on this one. If what we are fundamentally is already liberated, already free, then what is this practice thing? What is this meditation thing about? Right? You may already know the answer to this; if so, bear with me.

Ultimately there is no practice, really. It's more accurate to say that there's acceptance of what is, which is the *absence of struggle* with what is. Certainly by sitting still for a period of time—so-called meditation—we become aware of the difference between allowing what is and trying to change what is, and that's a shift in attention. When we allow what is, openness naturally happens. The letting go of the defense called ego naturally occurs. That's all ego is, really, a defense. It's protection, it's a survival mechanism. It's not a problem, really. More or less not a problem, that is. Like the body, more or less not a problem—for some people it's more of a problem, for others less. We deal with all kinds of body challenges, some of us more than others. Same with emotional challenges or mental challenges: more or less.

So accepting, being available for what is, is really what meditation is. It's not a doing. It's not that you're improving yourself. It's more that you're allowing being. And in that allowing, one recognizes the truth at some point, the already-completeness of what we

are. And we may experience that as just a moment of peace, of tremendous peace or love, unconditional love or connection, oneness with everything. Maybe it's a fleeting experience, very quick; or maybe it lingers, and we settle in to suchness. And then maybe we move back into the contraction, we have this sort of back-and-forth.

There's a physics to it, actually, just like there's a physics to all the laws of nature. There's a physics to liberation. So we're all little scientists and explorers in the unknown, and we have the laboratory of our experience to be a mirror for us. And this environment can be a very highly polished mirror for recognizing the truth, which is unnamable, unspeakable. It's the silent, a truth that we are already, but that we are paradoxically longing for.

But liberation is bringing consciousness back to itself, that's what it does. And acceptance is really allowing that to happen. That's what acceptance really is: allowing consciousness to return to the source of its being. And often it's a terrifying experience; it can be pretty scary. It can bring up fear, because it's like letting go and falling, losing control. That kind of letting go can feel very threatening. It's not threatening, actually, it's very freeing; but initially it can be scary, particularly if we've got a tight grip.

So gently we learn to be with the fear of losing control, and gradually we become comfortable with expansion, with losing a sense of me and you, where there's just oneness.

We want to make it very complicated, of course. Our minds love complicating things, they love having elaborate explanations. In fact that's what the mind does; it likes to explain things, organize things, understand things. So it's a little difficult for the mind, particularly since letting go only happens in the realm of not understanding. It's counter-instinctual to let go. Because holding on is instinctual, surviving is instinctual. And letting go isn't.

So mentally, it's just recognizing and allowing not knowing. That's harder; that may be the hardest part of so-called spiritual practice. People say, how can I trust? Actually I, the ego, cannot. It's actually against the ego's nature to trust. Because trust really, in the way I mean it, is not-knowing. It's being liberated that is the essence of trust; it's not an ego experience. Egos can't trust; they have too much to lose. They have to defend. Talking about this is a little tricky.

Trust is what we naturally are. It's the absence of ego. It's love, it's the one heart; it's the big heart. It's not a psychological attitude; it's flying, soaring in infinite freefall. That's what I mean by trust. So there's this willingness to sit in silence and be available for this

mirror. This mirror of whatever: one's discontent, one's anxiety, one's truth, whatever. It doesn't matter! It's not like, "oh this is good tonight, I was groovin' in the light!" Or, "this is a crummy night, I couldn't sit still and my mind was all over the place." It's just whatever, you know? Of course we can certainly say, "I like that, I don't like that", or "I'd rather be at peace than at war."

So the question, then, is can you be with what is right now? "Right now" meaning not only this moment, but any moment, anytime, anywhere. Can you be here for what's given, can you receive what's given in this moment? Or are you resisting what's given right now? Are you against it, are you moving away from it? Or are you trying to grab onto it? Or is there just...allowing it? Pretty easy, right? That isn't a really complicated set of choices. Am I against it, am I moving away from it? Am I grabbing onto it? Or am I allowing it? This should be fairly easy to notice, shouldn't it? No? Yeah, maybe not!

If one is in one's mental process it might be hard to know. So you get into your body; that's where meditation again becomes very helpful. Most meditation practices are body-oriented. You feel your body and feel what's going on, sensations in your breathing, and so on; you start getting tuned in, start to get a little more sensitive to what's going on here. Because the body is kind of like a biofeedback system. Check into your body. Notice how you're feeling, what you're sensing. Maybe you don't feel anything. Maybe you're numb or just blank; it's certainly possible. So just be blank, be numb. Be whatever it is. Just allow that.

The truth is, your particular doorway is whatever's here right now. That's actually very difficult for the mind to grok, to comprehend. It really is. I only say that from experience, not because I believe it. I don't, I'm not into belief. It's not my thing. I don't recommend it! Belief is just another bag of stuff—it's useful if it gets you in the door, onto your cushion, whatever. But the truth of your experience is in front of you. Can you find it?

Can you sit in front of the doorway of not knowing? That's what we call readiness. Readiness is actually the realization that we can't escape anymore, that we can't avoid it anymore. That's readiness. No blame, no shame. That's all. And you know if you're ready, because you show up. You show up regardless of how you feel. You sit down and you pay attention, regardless of what's present. Whether you want to or don't want to is irrelevant. You give yourself to this moment: this too, this too, whatever it is. The traffic jam. The resentment at work. Whatever. There're a million things, right? It's endless. Whatever it is that we push away, run from, grab onto. Anything in that category is fair game. So this really means that each moment is an opportunity for practice, for awakening, for seeing it as it is; that's all that's required. That's what it

means, "no attainment."

We're so attainment-conditioned. We are conditioned to achieve, to produce. So it's a little weird to talk about this, because the mind doesn't understand how it's possible. But does the mind understand how it's possible that you can stick a seed in the ground, and eventually have something grow? There's no difference. And we are that seed; the truth of what we are is that seed, and it will sprout and it will grow, all by itself. We just have to learn to water it, and give it sun, and the right earth, and it does it! That's what it means, "no attainment."

No one is excluded from liberation. It has nothing to do with worthiness or anything like that. It only has to do with readiness. That's all. Of course, it takes a lot of courage to face what is in any moment, doesn't it? It's easier to hide. It *seems* easier to hide. But that's survival. Ultimately, when it's no longer easier to hide, you're ready. When hiding becomes more difficult than facing what is, you know you're ready. That's all. Then you just put yourself in the saddle and let the bronco kick. That's all. Ride that bronco. Or that magic carpet; whatever your preferred mode of travel is!

It's really very strange to talk about something that's really the simplest thing there is, yet which is actually unspeakable. But it seems to be a human quality to talk; we like talking. So, feel free to speak up if you want to; raise your hand, however you want to do it. Yeah! Hi.

Q. What is the role of relationship in the spiritual path?

Jon: Life is relationship everywhere, whether with lovers, friends, what have you. So if you're committed to your own spiritual path, and you're in relationship, how do you relate to that, how do you deal with that? I think that intimate relationship is a great mirror. In fact it's often the most difficult mirror; the people closest to you, whether your lover, or your mother, father, brother, sister... It's with people who are very close that we often become the most defended. Initially you may be in love, and it's all groovy and everything. But eventually, you know, the defenses go up. And that's a great opportunity!

Now it's not about putting the relationship onto some altar and then offering incense, or something like that, turning it into a ceremony; it's about being available to the rawness of it. The heat of it. The sharpness of it. And obviously the pleasure of it too! But it's a very intense field to work in. And that's probably why so many spiritual types over the centuries have been celibate—because in some ways it's easier not to have to deal with

somebody else that closely. Right? But if you're in relationship, if you're involved with somebody, closely, then it can be a real opportunity.

As you let go of what is, as you allow what is, relationship is just what it is. It works, it doesn't work. It's a bumpy road, it's a smooth road. Whatever! You stay with it, you don't stay with it. Or you wonder whether you're going to stay with it. But it's another mirror. As you're deepening into presence, now, your partner may or may not be aware of that. That may not be their thing. Or maybe it is. Personally I don't think it matters. I think ultimately we find that another person's journey is really their business, not our business. And that's really what I mean by acceptance. And then it's a very powerful place to be, in relationship. Because then you really get to see where you try to make it your business. And that can be very liberating; that can be a real, fast, hot fire.

It's not so easy, though. And it usually requires the willingness to grieve, and the ability to really feel powerful emotions. Because when we're bonding with another human being, that's a very deep physical attachment. And if we're dealing with the freeing of attachment, we're dealing with a very deep level of instinct, and it's very powerful. The same is true with parents and children; it becomes a very, very powerful area to work, because it's so instinctual, it's in your cells. You know what I'm saying?

So I don't think one should be saying of relationship, "I should be above that." I think the attitude should be more like...dive in! Dive in, it's a really powerful field. It's a very interesting area to work with, and often it's avoided, or messed with. But I think it can be a really great area for cultivating one's own recognition of truth; and then, ultimately, you'll see the person as pure beingness.

It's like that old saying: when a pickpocket bumps into a saint, all he sees are his pockets. So, how does your lover look? What are you seeing? And then take the projection back, and be honest about it. That's hot work, hot meaning it's a little intense. But it's quick, very quick. Quick in the sense that it's probably the fastest way of letting go; letting go of our attachment and need for somebody to be a certain way. That is suffering. Big time.

You accept your partner; you accept them as they are. Or do they need to change, do they need to improve? And is it any different for ourselves? See, that's my point. It's all relationship, whether it's somebody out there, or with *moi*. It's the same dynamic; it's identical. So if you're not in relationship then the game is, *I need to change. I need to improve, I need to be enlightened, I need to be free of suffering. I need to be fixed. I need to be figured out. I need to be understood* Same thing!

So ultimately it's not out there. That's why it's a mirror. It's not so easy to look in the mirror, is it? Can you look in the mirror and see nothing? Can you look in the mirror and be at peace?

We're always getting feedback. Always, every moment; this moment. Not just when you're following your breath, or doing your mantra, your visualization, whatever. When you're cursing in the middle of a traffic jam, or at your partner—that's when paying attention becomes very useful. You can stop in the moment, and really let it in. And you see that it hurts to contract in that way, to resist what is. Resisting what is really hurts, doesn't it? When you can grieve the loss of the way it isn't, or the way your partner isn't, then you're on your way to freedom. That's all that's required. It's not that they have to change; when you can grieve the loss of what you didn't get, that's where transformation happens.

I'm talking about relationship, about someone who didn't meet your expectations. I was playing on that theme. When you can grieve that, and then fully let go, then the heart opens, and acceptance is what is. And forgiveness, too, that's when forgiveness is present. Forgiveness isn't just something you laminate onto yourself, onto your attitude. It's not a lamination job! It's really the essence of the deepest clearing; when there's nothing left, then forgiveness is. Just like acceptance; there's no difference.

Ultimately we can face everything. That's what readiness really means; it's the ability to face anything, ultimately. And learning how, that's really the art of compassion; it's learning how to become available to our deepest grief, our deepest disappointment or our most profound terror, or rage. I'm not talking about acting out, I'm talking about allowing that deep energetic movement to be freed, rather than held in. That's why people like us discovered things like meditation and yoga and tai chi and qigong; all these practices turn our bodies into lightning rods for energy. We can begin to see that we are one with mother Earth, and we can utilize that power and strength of support, which we need to be able to let go of our grief and our fear and our anger—our protection, at all its levels.

So that's why we invented these practices, spiritual practices so-called. And that's why meditation—sitting still, which we did when we started tonight—it's actually very simple, but also very powerful, and very profound. It's a very powerful practice, actually, to sit still. Obviously! Look around. Is there anything slowing down around us in this culture? It doesn't look like it; actually it looks like it's faster and faster. Just getting to a four-way intersection is often an extraordinary event, I find. Who's going to go through the intersection first, and who's going to run the light? It's like the Indianapolis 500 just going to the grocery store.

So stopping is a very yogically powerful event, and not to be taken lightly. It does work, though, if you learn how to utilize the technology. These tools can be very, very useful, so it's really worth it to learn how to use them well.

The Willingness to Be Available

It's amazing how something as simple as just sitting in silence together can be so rich. On the one hand there's not much going on; and yet, what *is* going on, when there's nothing to distract you?

It's so easy to get caught in distraction. But to choose to stop like this, to just be present, to show up—as I've often said, it requires readiness. No more escape hatches. Or you realize that escape hatches don't work any more. You might still try them, actually; but you come to realize that they don't work any more. Or maybe you keep realizing that, keep rediscovering that they don't work anymore. Until finally, you just say, ok. I give up. I'll just be here. With whatever's present. With whatever is physically present, emotionally present, mentally present.

I think the hardest part of that is not making conclusions about what one's experience means right now. Isn't that the hardest thing? To be available without knowing what it means, without getting caught in the conclusion, the story of it? That can be an escape hatch, the meaning of it all. Not to say it's meaningless; that would just be the opposite conclusion when in fact it's beyond either, it's all-encompassing. Awareness is all-encompassing. It excludes nothing. So all you have to do is notice where you're excluding, where you're pushing away, or pulling, struggling.

So in a way it's very simple. But of course it can be intense, or difficult, to not have a buffer; to not protect. To allow the heart to be open to its vulnerability. That's why compassion is so important; compassion means simply to allow vulnerability. Allow not knowing. Allow the vastness of our being to take us into the unknown.

Opening to the openness, as Jean Klein used to say, means the willingness to be available to whatever arises. It's easy to really want the pleasure of awakening; awakening *is* a great pleasure, and a great relief. It's also experiential evidence, you might say, of the existence of truth, and of freedom. So we continue on the path. Otherwise we'd probably stay down the escape hatch, one way or another.

So we want the pleasure of awakening, but we don't want the pain of suffering. But that's really the key, right there. The key is in the not wanting. That's the ultimate doorway to freedom, being available to the not wanting. Pain isn't the key; the pain just is what it is. The suffering is in our not wanting the pain, our resisting it. Or our wanting it, for that matter, which can include wanting to understand it, too; wanting to figure it out.

The good news is it's completely ok to be human, with all that that involves. It's not about getting the right merit badges so you're worthy; good enough, smart enough, whatever. All that's required is readiness. And readiness got you here, just like readiness somehow gets the bee to the flower, and gets the flower to open. That same mystery brings us to the truth.

Really it's just returning us to the source that we are. That's why, in a sense, we want that—because in some ways we know we're disconnected from that which we are, we know it intuitively, and we usually run around trying to fulfill ourselves in various ways, thinking that's going to make us happy. But ultimately we're seeking wholeness. We seek freedom, which is our true nature. So essentially, our self is bringing us back to our self. Or our no-self is bringing us back to our no-self, if you're Buddhist!

In a sense we can't *not* go home; it's not possible. Even if we're kicking and screaming the whole way, it's still not possible, just like gravity is part of our reality here on this planet. There really is a physics to this. We are the mystery of nature. We are as grand as the universe itself. As unknowable. We are not separate at all from that.

Of course if you're experiencing separateness, or isolation, or struggle, then let's talk. Let's find out what's going on, put a little light on it, so to speak. The value of this dialogue here is to come to the place where silence speaks. So if what's speaking out is noise, then we interact to return to the silence.

It's ok to explore the noise: the mental noise, the emotional noise, the physical noise, doesn't matter. No blame, no judgment at all. I so often hear people describing their judgments of themselves. It's relentless. It's sad that we do that to ourselves; how do we get into that habit? Judgment turns the heart to stone. What does it take to soften the heart, to warm it, so it opens and is available? That's all that's required. Just being present, that's it. Ultimately that's the whole of the teaching. You get that, then you just hang with that until it's done, basically. That's about it.

Of course it does precipitate that which is still struggling, as you know if you've been at this for a while. But that's ok, that's just the way it works. It's tough, it's difficult, because often the mind goes, well I guess I'm not getting it, because I'm still struggling, I'm still frightened, I'm still angry, I'm still confused, still sad and frustrated. I'm still unsatisfied. It's hard to continue, isn't it, when you're unsatisfied?

So the saving grace, if you will, is grace itself. The truth that we are, that we all are. We're already it. We're already free. We may not realize it yet; we may not be one with

that yet. And believing it doesn't really help that much. Believing won't do it, in other words. Belief may be useful, of course, if it keeps you on the path. But ultimately, like they say in Zen, talking doesn't boil water.

So do you know what I mean when I say the truth of who you are? Is it clear what that means? Not clear intellectually, but clear in the fullness of being? That's why we have this mirror called satsang. That's really what it is, that's its only purpose. Fundamentally, that's its true value. Satsang is the realization that we're not separate. There's really no me and no you at this level of awareness.

The Pain of Not Knowing

In the Zen monastery, in the zendo, the meditation hall, watches are not allowed. And I've noticed that here, during the meditation, some people keep checking the time. Like, gee, I wonder how much longer I'm going to have to sit here? Is he late? Is he torturing me again? Or whatever!

It's really recommended during meditation periods that you keep your watch somewhere you won't see it. Otherwise you're denying yourself the pain of not knowing. And that's an endless detour. Don't deny yourself the pain of not knowing! That's a very powerful and important pain. It seems quite harmless, of course, "oh, I'm just looking at my watch. Just want to see what time it is. I want to know, is it ten more minutes, thirty more minutes, one more minute?" But again, that's a detour around something that can be very powerful. Because ultimately it's all about not knowing. That's really the secret teaching.

Now, you could look at this as just another rule you have to follow, that's restricting you when you don't want to be restricted. I don't know if that comes up for you in this situation, but it might. And that's one way to perceive that, one way to see it; but it's a way that will only perpetuate suffering. Better to just experience what is. The urge to know: feel what that is. If you look at your watch—if you satisfy that urge, in other words—then you don't get to feel it. You take it away from yourself; you're denying yourself, actually. Ironic, but true.

In the Zen monastery, at least when I was there, if you moved in meditation you were hit with a stick. Not abusively, of course, it was done well; and there was a physiology to it, it stimulated the trapezius muscles to help you stay awake and help you stay focused. But they discovered over the centuries that sitting still was much more effective than moving around. That's all. It's not like you're supposed to be torturing yourself, but there is a power in stillness. The path of stillness is like taking the Concorde to Europe as opposed to roller skating and swimming to Europe. Again, it's not meant to be torture; it's meant to be a well-discovered piece of advice.

So the need to move is another urge for you to feel—like needing to know what time it is—in the meditation period. Simply feel that urge, that compulsion to move. Now if you're in pain and you need to shift your position because you're injuring yourself, then move, obviously. But experiment with that, because we're cooking here. This is a cooker, this is a little microwave we've got going here. You're cooking from the inside out, and also from the outside in.

It can be helpful, when you're sitting, just to give yourself a little encouragement to stay with what is right now, as best you can. And if you really want to know what time it is, really want to know how much longer you're going to have to sit there, then feel that wanting to know, feel that pain. Otherwise you don't get to feel it, and then it comes up again, and again, and again. But if you really feel it, you're done. The struggle ends. Then you can enjoy yourself.

Stillness is the ease of being. It's not holding yourself still. It's not holding back from moving. Not looking at the watch is relaxing into not knowing, relaxing into the discomfort of not knowing. The grief, the suffering, the fear, whatever it is. The anger, the anxiety, the restlessness, the impatience. Whatever. It's giving space to that. Ironically, it's stillness that allows that to move which needs to move. That's all.

The Fruition of the Path

I want to talk about this idea of what kind of lifestyle is necessary to take a spiritual journey seriously. And I just want to say that it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter whether you're a monk or a householder. It doesn't make any difference at all. There's no guarantee one way or the other, and no hindrance one way or the other. Ultimately it isn't about that.

I want to talk about Jean Klein, who was my first realized teacher. He was not a monk. He was a medical doctor, and a concert violinist, and a musicologist, and had two grown daughters before he really entered his path. In fact he was on the last train out of Germany into France before the Nazis closed the border; it was a tumultuous period of time. And he went off to India to explore the deeper meaning of life, because clearly what was going on in Europe was insane. I want to get back to Jean later when we talk about integration and leaving the retreat, because he had some things to say that I think are really beautiful and appropriate; but I don't want to say them just yet.

The only thing that's required for the spiritual journey to come to fruition is that one has to come to that place where the profound desire to be free of suffering is the number one priority. That's all that's required; the rest will take care of itself. That's the only thing that's required.

Q. Put another way, you'd have to be suffering intolerably? Is that the same thing?

Jon: Could be. But there are many people who are suffering intolerably who fundamentally want to be comfortable in a temporal sense, so I wouldn't say that that was it, necessarily.

I can talk about my own case, which some of you may not know about. When I was sixteen, I reached a point in my life where it was either find happiness or die. I was so driven and so achievement-oriented that I really made type A look catatonic. Seriously! That's the truth; anybody who knew me back then will confirm it. So I was very lucky that I had an awakening at sixteen, because otherwise I'd be dead.

Interestingly enough, I didn't know what happened to me at the time. It was clearly a big experience—which is an interesting story in and of itself—but I didn't really know what had happened until I was twenty, when I was fortunate enough to have a reading with Anne Armstrong, a very respected psychic. She told me that I'd had many lifetimes as a celibate monk, and that I knew what to do to set myself up, as a young

person in this life, to facilitate an awakening at sixteen. Because I wasn't religious, and I didn't know anything about meditation or spirituality or anything like that.

Anyway, it happened, and it changed my whole life, and she acknowledged what had happened to me when I met her at twenty. But what I wanted to say was that that was the beginning of the path. The awakening was sort of a wake-up call. Many people awaken but don't necessarily get on the path. Awakening is really not a big deal; it's really what we are. Grace is really our fundamental nature, and many people experience it in many different ways. But it does require being at the end of your rope, to a certain degree, for freedom from suffering to really become your main priority. That's absolutely essential. Because it takes a kind of determination that is unrelenting.

But you've demonstrated that determination, actually; that's what I'm here to say. You've already demonstrated that this weekend, even if you're in a process right now, even if you're not really in a groovy space. There are people who are in a very groovy space right now; I know, I've been talking to them. I won't embarrass them by mentioning their names, but there's a range of where people are right now in this room. So if you're in a process, and a lot has been stirred up, be careful not to judge the quality of your retreat based on that.

The truth is, you're not qualified to judge it. You don't really know how you're doing. That's really the truth. That's not a put-down; that's really the truth. If you live in the question, you'll find out over time. If you're confused, or if you're stirred up, I encourage you to hang in there. In a way, it's kind of tricky to come to a short retreat, where it's actually very hot. It's a little tricky, because it does move a lot. Those who have been here numerous times and have had the experience, they get it. But if you haven't, and you don't know, it can be a little disorienting.

So you'll take the retreat with you. The work you've done here doesn't end here; it's going to continue. Some part of you made the choice to be here, and I believe you can trust that part of you. And when you leave, really take time to check in with yourself, to be still, to not just automatically get back into all the habits of your life. It's very easy to do that; it's like a tsunami that's ready to swallow you up as soon as you get out the door. It can happen! So I really encourage you to make the effort to be conscious. And stopping—meditating—can help.

One of the things that Jean said, which I really think is appropriate, was "it's not good to work too much." He said, "spend some time every day in openness." He didn't say "sit on your cushion and meditate forty minutes a day." But it might turn out to be that way. Or it might be three hours, who knows? It's not a rigid prescription. He also said,

“when there is no one meditating, then meditation is happening.” The form of meditation is not meditation. The forms of meditation are a setup to, God willing, discover real meditation, the so-called openness, or grace, of our true being.

So you become available, even in the struggle, even in the turbulence. You say OK, yes to this even, yes to this moment; and then allow transformation to happen. And you may cry, and you may scream, and you may shake in fear; all of that may happen. That’s just movement, that’s just the unwinding of the ego-protective wall. That is not who we are, that’s just the crumbling and dissolving of the false self. Let it happen. That’s what you want. Isn’t it?

The truth is, you’ve done incredibly well here. It’s been a beautiful, beautiful retreat. It’s an incredible pleasure to be sitting with you this morning, and just feeling how you’ve been doing your work. Believe it or not, you have been doing your work. There’s a huge difference from day one, from when we arrived. Huge. And for those that know me, I don’t fib about that kind of thing.

Everyone’s path is unique. It’s important to know that. You may read books by teachers, or people you respect, and think, “well I guess that’s the way it’s supposed to happen. That’s what happened to them, right?” Or if I tell my story, it’s what happened to me. But you have your own story in that regard, and that’s going to unfold in its own unique way for you. There are common elements that everyone shares, and when you begin to get it, you can benefit from hearing them and understanding that. But the truth is, your own unfoldment is really very specific to you.

That’s why it’s so important to pay attention, closely, so you begin to let it unravel. There’s no one else who can do that work but you, there’s not going to be any great guru who’s going to zap you into enlightenment. You might get high, you know, in a satsang environment, and kind of dig that high. That’s nice, but that isn’t going to do it for you. You can get addicted to that, and then you stay in that immature, adolescent space of wanting it to be served to you on a silver platter. And it ain’t gonna be!

So once you’ve awakened and you begin to get the hang of it, it’s important to take responsibility, to begin to move towards the truth that you are, and to realize that ultimately you can’t rely on anybody else. On no teacher, no anything. I’m not saying you shouldn’t get support; support is actually very, very important for most people. Learning how to get support is also important, and I’m happy to talk about it with anybody who wants to explore that.

I have benefited greatly from support. It may sound like I’ve been blessed with God

knows how many incredible teachers and healers that I've been close to, who have mentored me, and it's true. But that's because I absolutely couldn't have survived without them! I was willing to go anywhere on this planet, spend any money, devote any amount of time I had to, because I didn't have a choice! It was that or death.

So that's how it worked for me. And there's a lot available today, in terms of support. As I was saying to Adya the other day, I'm just finding out how to do this, I'm just learning how to teach. And he said "right, that's how it works." I'm finding out how to be supportive, in a way. It's tricky! Very tricky. Anyway, I hope that I'm useful to you. Whatever!

The work that you do is what matters, what really matters. And then, as you get the fragrance—as one of my teachers said, when your nose is clean you can smell the flower. When you get the fragrance, then you're just plugged right into the transmission. And then that's very useful; it's actually very helpful. Just realize it's you. It's not that guy over there. It's not the you that's the me. It's the oneness. And when you're tuned in there, fall in love as much as possible. Completely surrender to love.

Brother David once told me that a monk is encouraged to fall in love as much as possible. Which doesn't mean to be attached to every single person; that's not what he meant by love. He meant the big heart, the openness of being. The realization that we are not separate. That is love. That is intimacy. And if you're not used to it it's downright frightening, usually.

Please cultivate not-knowing. Find out how to cultivate not-knowing. Be creative. Let me know what you discover; everybody's mind works differently. I'm not saying cultivate stupidity. That's not what I'm saying! Trust me, I had to figure out every single thing that ever happened. I told you, my mother used to get me these puzzles, and I was going to figure them out come hell or high water, and I would sit and work on those things for eight hours without stopping. So I was very compulsive in terms of figuring things out.

When I was on a retreat with Jean Klein at Mt. Madonna, many, many years ago, a big shift took place. And he said, "Live in not-knowing." And the effort to figure things out dropped, completely, at that point. And it was like, aaahhh, it was like a thousand tons of bricks were taken off my back, and I could not believe it. I really realized that I didn't have to figure it out anymore, that that was like pushing a ten-ton boulder uphill: pointless! It was such a relief, I couldn't believe it. It was just opening to the presence, realizing that was the teacher, that was the guide, that was the fire of transformation. That was the truth! It wasn't what I thought; it wasn't what I believed.

I'm speaking at the deepest level, now, about the deepest level of understanding. The understanding of not-knowing. It's a relief, a huge relief, and you will feel it. For those that know, you know what I mean. It's a huge relief when that burden of needing to know falls off. Maybe just for a moment, maybe for an hour, maybe for a weekend. Maybe for the rest of your life. God willing!

The Dalai Llama said that the purpose of life is to be happy. I agree. We all deserve that. Everyone deserves to be happy. That's really what we want, I believe that's really what we want. And I pray that each and every one of you finds it.



Jon expresses deep gratitude to his teacher Adyashanti, who closely and with love mentored Jon to fruition on the path and asked him to teach.

Jon experienced his first awakening at the young age of 16, leading him to spend many years intensively practicing in the Zen and Vipassana Buddhist traditions. Along the way, his spiritual unfoldment was greatly enhanced by close teacher/student relationships with Advaita masters Jean Klein, H.W.L. Poonja (Papaji) and Robert Adams.

Jon holds Satsang weekly in San Francisco. Schedules and contact info are available at www.sf-satsang.org

