

## **“Living Meditation Living Insight” by Dr. Thynn Thynn**

### **Living Meditation**

**Student:** I have a lot of worries and stress. I try to meditate in order to relax, but it is no use.

**Thynn:** In this fast-moving world, meditation is regarded as an instant remedy for life’s ills. If you look upon meditation as merely a tranquilizer, you are underestimating its true value. Yes, relaxation does occur through meditation, but that is only one of its many results. Meditation in Buddhism is neither an instant cure nor just a stress-relieving measure.

Meditation in Buddhism means cultivation of the mind in order to achieve insight wisdom or pañña, ultimately leading to liberation or nibbana.

**Student:** Nibbana aside, I want to meditate, but I cannot find the time.

**Thynn:** When you speak of meditation, you may think of the type of meditation that is popular these days, the sitting form of meditation. But that form is merely an aid, a support to develop a mental discipline of mindfulness and equanimity. The form should not be mistaken for the path.

The popular notion is that you need to set aside a special time or place to meditate. In actuality, if meditation is to help you acquire peace of mind as you function in your life, then it must be a dynamic activity, part and parcel of your daily experience. Meditation is here and now, moment-to-moment, amid the ups and downs of life, amid conflicts, disappointments and heartaches — amid success and stress. If you want to understand and resolve anger, desires, attachments and all the myriad emotions and conflicts, need you go somewhere else to find the solution? If your house was on fire, you wouldn’t go somewhere else to put out the fire, would you?

If you really want to understand your mind, you must watch it while it is angry, while it desires, while it is in conflict. You must pay attention to the mind as the one-thousand-and-one thoughts and emotions rise and fall. The moment you pay attention to your emotions, you will find that they lose their strength and eventually die out. However, when you are inattentive, you find that these emotions go on and on. Only after the anger has subsided are you aware that you have been angry. By then, either you have made some unwanted mistakes or you have ended up emotionally drained.

**Student:** How do you handle these emotions? I know that when I am angry I want to shout and throw things. Should I control these emotions or express them?

**Thynn:** The natural inclination is to try to control the emotions. But when they are kept under a lid, they try to escape. They either rush out with a bang or they leak out as sickness or neuroses.

**Student:** What should I do? Do I let my emotions go wild?

**Thynn:** Certainly not. That is exactly what we don’t want to do. That is another extreme — to release your emotions impulsively. The important thing is neither control nor non-control. In either situation you are working up your desire to control. Neither situation is tenable. So long as this desire occupies your mind, your mind is not free to see anger as it is. Hence another paradox arises: the more you want to be free of the anger, the more you are not free of it.

To understand the mind, you have to watch and pay attention with an uncluttered, silent mind. When your mind is chattering away, all the time asking questions, then it lacks the capacity to look. It is too busy asking questions, answering, asking.

Try to experience watching yourself in silence. That silence is the silence of the mind free from discriminations, free from likes and dislikes, free from clinging.

Thoughts and emotions by themselves are just momentary and possess no life of their own. By clinging to them, you prolong their stay.

Only when your mind is free from clinging and rejecting can it see anger as anger, desire as desire. As

soon as you “see,” your mental process is fully preoccupied with “seeing,” and in that split second anger dies a natural death. This seeing, or insight, called pañña (Insight Wisdom), arises as a spontaneous awareness that can be neither practiced nor trained. This awareness brings new insight into life, new clarity and new spontaneity in action.

So, you see, meditation need not be separate from life and its daily ups and downs. If you are to experience peace in this everyday world, you need to watch, understand and deal with your anger, desire and ignorance as they occur. Only when you cease to be involved with your emotions can the peaceful nature of your mind emerge. This peace-nature enables you to live every moment of your life completely. With this newfound understanding and awareness, you can live as a complete individual with greater sensitivity. You will come to view life with new and fresh perceptions. Strangely enough, what you saw as problems before are problems no more.

### **Staying with the Moment**

**Student:** I have tried being mindful of the moment. But it is strenuous and I get all tangled up.

**Thynn:** For goodness sakes, staying with the moment is only a figure of speech. It is not a commandment to be followed rigidly. This is not a proficiency test. You must understand this from the outset; otherwise you will be tied up in knots trying too hard every second of the day.

**If you become too involved with staying in the moment, you lose the art of living — of free flowing.**

You must realize that staying with the moment is just a means to break the mind’s old habits. Usually the mind flitters between thoughts and feelings about the past, present and future. Staying with the moment is just a way to train the mind to cease flitting.

**It is not important that you be with the moment every single moment of the day. What is important is that you learn to get out of the constant mental run-around and to be more focused and grounded.**

Once you break the habit of the roaming mind, you will find you are more centered and more with the present moment.

**Student:** What do we gain from this?

**Thynn:** That is a very pertinent question. Of course, you will have better concentration, but you can achieve concentration without learning the art of meditation. Many activities — golf, chess, reading — enhance concentration.

**Student:** What is the difference between those activities and moment- to-moment meditation?

**Thynn:** If you look into the process involved in those activities, you will see an element of desire — the desire to achieve perfection, to win a game, to feel good, whatever. You are motivated by desire. Also, there is an end to the activity and so to the concentration. Concentration is also very important in meditation, but it is not every- thing. If we simply concentrate, we will not get any further benefit. To meditate, it is crucial to be mindful without desire, without aversion, without likes and dislikes, and without goals.

**If you can be mindful without judgments and without likes and dislikes, then you are practicing with an inner silence or equanimity, called upekkha in Pali.**

This is true in both formal sitting meditation and in the informal, unstructured meditation we are discussing now. Two elements are involved: staying with the moment and viewing everything without likes and dislikes.

**Student:** So just being mindful is not enough?

**Thynn:** That's right. Being mindful is not sufficient. It is only a means. What is crucial is incorporating equanimity or upekkha into your mindfulness.

**Student:** If things are very hectic I cannot even redirect my attention to another activity, but find I have to just live in the chaos.

**Thynn:** Well, letting go of the mindfulness can be appropriate. But we must also talk about living in the chaos. How do you deal with the chaos?

**Student:** Sometimes I become involved in the chaos and get carried away by it.

**Thynn:** Yes, if your mindfulness is not strong enough you can easily be drawn into the chaos. The mindfulness I am talking about is the mindfulness of your own mind. If you are not aware of your thoughts and your feelings about the chaos, you can easily slip into interacting in the situation, reacting to the chaos. Before you know what's happening, you are already storming through the chaos, thus creating more chaos.

If you are mindful of your own feelings as you notice the chaos, you can choose how to act in the situation.

**Instead of being only aware of the outside chaos, stop and look directly into yourself and see what is there.**

**Student:** Do you mean we should be passive in a chaotic conflict?

**Thynn:** No. Again, there is nothing rigid about it. One situation may require a firm hand that cuts right through to the heart of the matter. If you are acting with awareness it will be the right action. Another situation might require that you become quiet and not generate more confusion. If you stop and look, you will know what to do in each situation. If you view both the chaos and your mind with upekkha (inner silence or equanimity), you will know what to do and will not be bothered by the chaos.

**Student:** If we stop to look, how can we react to others in the right way? We wouldn't have time to think of what to do.

**Thynn:** This is the most difficult part to explain. We are so used to functioning with the intellect that it seems quite impossible to function in any given situation without conceptualizing. You see, here we are talking about insight or pañña (Insight Wisdom). It's a paradox: insight does not arise unless the conceptualizing stops altogether. In a chaotic situation insight can arise only when we stop conceptualizing about the chaos. Mindfulness of our own mind will in fact stop the conceptualizing that our minds normally go through. When the mindfulness is strong enough and there is total silence in the mind, then insight will spontaneously arise as to how best to deal with the situation at hand.