



Welcome to week three of “The Art of Somatic Mindfulness.” Last week we talked about the power of the body to ground this restless mind. Another important quality of the body for the support and the development of mindfulness is that the body exists in the radical present. The body is not feeling in the past or the future, it’s feeling right now. It has the power to draw us into this present moment and to show us how to settle into the vividness of our own experience as it is unfolding. I like to call this the body’s time. The body’s time is not in the past and not in the future, it’s in the *now*.

In the West, our sense of time is linear and bounded. Time can be measured, we check our watches, and we count the days. Time passes and time marches on. In our world, we could say in the world of the West, time is quantifiable and measurable. But in some mystical traditions, there exists a different kind of time. For example, the Aranda people [also known as Arrernte, Arunta, or Arrarnta] of Australia describe a time out of time, or a dream time. This is the time in which ancestors live eternally. It’s a beautiful concept. I think in Buddhism we have something like that in the practice of refuge, where we call on the lineage to be present, beyond space and time.

Similarly, in Buddhism, we have the notion of a timeless time. A meditation master of Tibet named Longchempa used to call that the fourth time. The past is the first time, the present the second time, and the future is the third time. And then there’s something called the fourth time, which is a time beyond time or a time out of time. This is an absolute nowness that is unbounded and radically present. We might say the timeless time doesn’t lean on the past or the future. In some ways, it might say that a practice of mindfulness is a practice of learning to enter into this absolute nowness that has no beginning, no middle, and no end. Another way to put this is that the present is always happening. Even when we’re ruminating on the past or anticipating the future, there is this unfolding in the present that is happening, that we’re distracted from by being caught by or drawn into our thoughts that are moving towards the past or the future. In the meantime, we’re kind of missing our life in the present moment.

One of the reasons that meditation is so powerful and so useful is it’s constantly encouraging us to land back into the moment. The ordinary mind that is our thinking mind or ruminating mind tends to resist being in the present moment. We’re always just a little bit ahead or a little bit behind. Our mind is kind of secure with the idea of being bound with minutes and with days. It’s the place we latch on to.

So how is it that meditation helps us come into the now? The bridge for coming into the now is the body, and in particular, “the body in the body” that I talked about in week two. The body in the body is the body that is feeling, experiencing, and breathing right now. This is the body of the radical present, The body of the present moment. So to come into relationship with the



radical now, or absolute now, or the timeless time can be as simple as just coming into contact with a sensation that is happening in the body. And that moment we go from being caught up in the past and the future into just now, just being.

We can try that through a practice of meditation together right now. So let's do that, let's give it a try. Just closing our eyes. Notice a sensation happening right now in your feeling body. It could be as something as simple as the feeling of the air on your skin. Whatever that feeling is, allow it to draw and absorb your attention so that you're not focusing on the feeling so much as you are allowing the feeling to draw you in. And you're not so much paying attention to the feeling as you are letting attention saturate the feeling in the same way that a sponge draws up water. Just notice how this feeling is not happening in the past. It's not happening in the future. It's just unfolding in the now, fresh, vivid, and awake.

Just see if you can relax into that feeling without needing to go anywhere other than where you are, right here, right now. You might try asking the question: has there ever been anything other and this? When you practice in this way, it's not hard to notice how the ruminating mind and the feeling body are operating in two different dimensions of time. The mind's dimension is linear, tugging away from the present. The experiential body's dimension is now, zeroing in on the present. As long as that lateral tug is happening there's a sense of alienation, a pulling apart of the mind and the body. This is the duality of yogic understanding. Not an existential dualism of a subject and an object, but a somatic dualism, body and mind being a little out of sync with each other. To heal the pain of that dualism begins with the simple act of inviting the mind to pay attention to the body's time so that the mind can learn a simple truth: there is just now. The mind notices that this is all there is and that draws us into a peaceful gap, the place where wakefulness is found. Thank you.