

Edward Brown Brief Morning Talk
during one day sitting at Green Gulch Farm
July 18, 2018

Good morning. I'd like to again thank you for being here today. We all have choice in our life: what do you—what are you going to do with your time? And often we're thinking, *how do I get the most out of this day?* And we're trying to figure out where to invest our time and where we get the best returns. So we think about our life and our opportunity in life similar to investors. It's kind of ironic. And Suzuki Roshi would try to tell us from time to time, "Although you hippies aren't interested in a material life, you still want to improve. Isn't that kind of a materialistic idea?"

So we'll be talking more about all these things today, but I do want to mention to you: you've already done the hardest part, which is giving up all those other things you were going to do today—or you might have done—and all those other possible plans and things. And here you are. And you got out of the house. And you left your life in enough order that it's probably going to be there when you get back to it. Not bad. So this is the hard part. The rest of this, you just sit here and follow the schedule and do the next thing and see what happens. So not—pretty nice, huh? Thank you. From now on, you just coast until you have to make the next decision about where do I go when I leave here? And then—okay. But you may have plans for that already.

So I'm—I—the Rumi poem, by the way—I just heard it on the—I was listening to a CD by Coleman Barks on the way over here, so it's short enough I could memorize it.

Listen, if you can stand to.
Union with the Friend is not being who you've always been,
But silence: A view: A place
Where silence—where language is inside seeing.

Language is inside seeing. And again, well, this is my theme for the day: to look at the difference between being in control or being in charge and receiving support. All of us have actually done a fabulous, an amazing job getting this far in our life. I was working with a friend of mine yesterday, and he was saying that about two months old, as a baby, when you're in a prone position, you learn how to lift your head and then you can look around and your view is much wider now, rather than the floor. Turn your head from side to side and suddenly you can see. And you have a choice of where to look. But you are still helpless. And Mom and Dad—whoever holds you—needs to support your head. If your head is not supported, then you die. If your head falls back, you can snap the—or hurt the second, third vertebrae in the neck and you don't live. So somebody has to hold you.

And is that being held—is that a support or is that control? And there are times when, as a parent, you need to control things. You need to give enough support and

enough control, and, in the meantime, as a baby, you want to be looking around. So we've all learned. And that's one of the most amazing things that we learn in our life—two months old—how to lift your head up and look around.

So we've all done a lot of this study about how to manage things. And, again, this is our cultural mode. We think life is about managing, being in charge. And if the way you're doing it doesn't work, there must be some better way to be in charge. How to have authority? How to tell yourself—your own body, mind, and others—what to do or not do? And how do you do that so that things work out better according to your idea, right? How to get them to work out?

So in terms of meditation, we're looking at—we have enough structure here that you can actually focus on—more on receiving support. So less about performance, more about just being present, seeing what you notice, noticing what you see. It's not—as Rumi says, it's not the way you've been. So in that sense, I work a lot with this, but when we do Qi Gong, you notice what your experience is. And it's more about receiving sensation, receiving experience than being in charge and giving out the directives and instructions about how you and everything else should behave. And if you improved your performance enough, you'd get better results. There's still going to be inhaling and exhaling. There's still going to be light and dark, happiness and sadness, and so on. There's another Rumi poem:

This we have now
is not imagination,
not a grief or a joy.
This is not a judging state,
or a sadness or an elation.
Those come and go.
This is the Presence
that doesn't.

So emphasis in Zen meditation is: show up. Be present. See what's happening. This is it. So sorry. Anyway....

So to give you a few specific pointers: we're practicing in silence, especially here in the meditation hall, right outside the meditation hall. If you're away from the group and with a friend, companion, you're welcome to talk, visit, as long as you know you're—it's quietly. You're not distracting others who are practicing the silence. Similarly, when we're sitting, you're welcome to move. You can stand up. You can come in late, as some of you did. You can leave early. You can move. You can stand. You can—but again, if you're moving while others are sitting still, then move quietly and carefully, slowly, deliberately, so that you're as little—as much as possible, you're not disturbing others who are sitting still. Okay?

I also like to let you know, in case you haven't been here to Green Gulch, where the bathrooms are. Excuse me. I've gotten older and I need them more often. Right over

here on this side of the building, there's a building going out perpendicular to Stillwater Hall, and on the side of that building there's a restroom, which I think is for both sex. And then over on this building that goes out perpendicular on the other side, on the far side of that building there's a men's room and a women's room, and I don't know that we're particular about who uses which. I think you get to decide for yourself, which gen—I don't know about all that stuff anymore. Can't keep up. I'm—you figure it out.

Byron Katie tells a funny story about how she was in the—she went into the women's room and—Byron Katie—*Loving What Is*: “Judge your neighbor. Write it down. Ask four questions. Turn it around.” Amazing, amazing work that she does, which she calls The Work. And she tells a story about going into a women's room, and she goes into the stall, and the toilet seat is all wet. And she thinks, *what's going on here? Was the person in here before me a transvestite and standing on the toilet seat and peeing all over it? What happened here? This is outrageous.* And then she does her Work and she's okay with that and she cleans it off and she uses the toilet. And then, when she flushes it, the water sprays all over. So much for what you think and....

All right. I also—one last—in terms of orientations—I really encourage you to stay the whole day or—unless you have plans to leave a little earlier for one reason or another. Sometimes people get discouraged and—but, actually, being discouraged is part of our life and you can learn how to be discouraged and survive and do fine and to not have things going as well as you'd like them to go and.... Another version of “are you getting a good return on your investment?” is “are you getting good experiences to add to your collection?” which you can then pull out of your collection: “Look at the experience *I* had.”

This happens especially in my life when you're with other people and they say, “Oh yes, I did—we just got back from Rome. We were just in Greece and Mexico and Bali and....” And I'm like, “Oh, okay. Yeah. Good for you. Fine. Okay.” And it doesn't matter much to me, but some people like—that's a good thing. You play your cards and you show them what you got. And then, do you have—who's got the better cards? And—but—so I don't know, but we're just hanging out here today and you may or may not get a good experience or two to add to your collection. And you might get this other experience that—*wow, that was challenging and I survived.* And then you go, “Oh, look at that. I made it through the difficulty,” and—rather than thinking life is about avoiding all the difficulties and problems and having only successes. You understand?

It's like people who say—I have a new book out. Excuse me for going on like this, but we're going to stop shortly. I have a new book out called *No Recipe*. And it was a challenge to write because people are saying, “Oh, no recipe? Oh. You're not going to tell us how to produce masterful vegetarian dishes with little stress and very little labor? With little—no work and no stress? You're not going to tell us how to do that? Ew. What kind of book is that?”

So I say, "Let's get real and see what's going on here and how to be *you* here in the midst of all this. You be you." Okay? Thank you.

Next we're going to have—for those of you who are—have some idea of what to do or don't need an idea what to do, there's a period of outdoor walking. For those of you who would like some instruction in outdoor walking, I give some instruction in outdoor walking. And then, after the instruction in outdoor walking, I'll give some instruction in sitting. So if you'd like the instruction, you stay here. If you want to go out and walk, you go out and walk. Okay?

Then, in about forty minutes—is that—that's about how much time we need. Forty minutes? Forty-five minutes? In about forty minutes or forty-five minutes, those who've been out walking—Anne here is going to hit a bell outside to signal you to come back in, and then those of you who've been at the instruction go out and walk. And after that we have a period of Qi Gong and then we have a period of sitting and then it's lunchtime and, before you know it, if you're anything like me, it's fifty years later. What happened? Wow.

Okay. So thank you. Hang around if you'd like some instruction.

(Edward punctuates his talks with frequent laughs)

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Transcribed by Sally Harris Sange 18-10-29