

Mindfulness is Kindfulness

A lot of people will feel like they could never do a silent retreat. We may already be feeling how they could reach that conclusion; it isn't easy of all the time. Yet if we just take life one moment at a time, we can do this. We can be silent, we can be more aware of what we are experiencing, we can be more present even with the difficult things in life.

Actually what are we going to miss? "I couldn't last x days not talking!" yet is it the lack of talking that we, or they, are really scared of. Probably it's not the talking we will miss, it's the being listened to.

What would be a reasonable definition of mindfulness in meditation? Perhaps it is paying attention to whatever arises without rejection.

Jon Kabat-Zinn's definition of mindfulness:

"Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way;
On purpose,
In the present moment, and
Non-judgmentally."

How does that sound to you?

Does it sound dry and mechanical, or does it feel warm and humane?

Can we see in this definition a description of very deep listening?

If we listened to another, or if another listened to us, with wholeheartedness (purpose), presence, and without judging (ourselves or the other), it would be a beautiful moment for both of us.

We can listen to ourselves, and all of our experience with this same attitude.

Paying attention to ourselves, another or to the world with mindfulness' qualities is an act of kindness. The effects of which ripple out into the world. Even if we're only paying that act of kindness to oneself it naturally extends to all beings through our affected thoughts, words and deeds.

Mindfulness is kindfulness, paying attention is generosity, being with is intimacy. These are beautiful qualities of the heart.

When we recognise that meditation is the deepest listening we can experience in this life, we see that on a retreat where we don't talk but do listen - and more fully than ever before - we are getting the best side of a beautiful duality.