

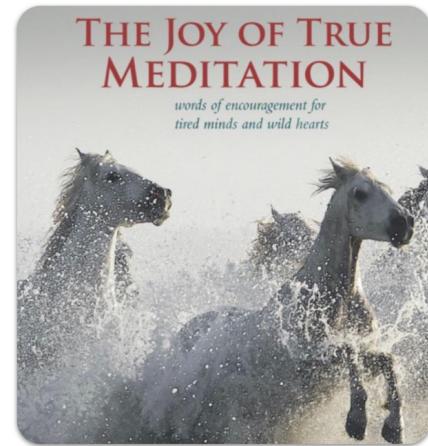
The Joy of True Meditation

... for tired minds and will hearts (a summary by Pat Evert)

- The discovery of true meditation

I discovered true meditation: not through books, spiritual teachers or meditation classes, but through death and rebirth, through coming a hair's breadth from suicide and self-destruction.

From as early as I can remember, I believed that there was something profoundly wrong with me. I felt sick and broken and ugly inside; unworthy of love, a mistake of a human being; damaged beyond redemption, beyond hope. And then one ordinary day, I could no longer run from the darkness within, no longer push life away and seek refuge in the conceptual mind; there was no longer any safe haven to be found there. I was being called to face life. The joy, the terror, the rage, searing feelings of abandonment suppressed since childhood, waves of unspeakable grief – I could no longer escape them now. Something deep inside me was starting to say yes – yes to being alive, yes to not knowing, yes to the joy and the sorrow of existence, yes to the mess of being an imperfect human being, yes to the darkness and the light, yes to all of it! **Our feelings are safe, no matter how intense they are.** It is our tensing-up around our human feelings, our rejection and refusal of them, our unconscious efforts to destroy and annihilate and purify them inside of us, our shaming of our vulnerable inner life and the smothering of the inner child, which causes so much pain and suffering. Not the feelings themselves. Even when the moment seemed unbearable, I could always bear it. Something inside me was indestructible. It could not be killed. It was soft, vulnerable, radically open and receptive, but it was also stronger and harder and more valuable than the most precious diamond, and brighter than a billion suns. I was beginning to discover my true nature; who I really was. **I started to fall in love with life again. I wanted to feel them all, experience them all,** taste them all. I was no longer afraid of my thoughts, I wanted to think up entire universes, create entire galaxies of imagination. I wanted to be broken and whole at the same time. The more **I have learned to befriend**, embrace and soothe my own sorrow, bliss, loneliness, anger, fears, my weird desires and wild uncontrollable urges, learned to love all the crazy voices in my head (without confusing them with reality), the more I have been able to accept and not fear them in you (and therefore be able to be present with you, and not try to fix you, **but love you instead, exactly as you are**). Your longings are my own. Your terrors have moved through me too. Your bliss and your despair move me deeply; they are so familiar here. Your burning questions are so recognizable and honest. The healing



journey is not about “getting rid” of the unwanted and “negative” material within us, purging it until we reached a perfect and utopic “healed state”. No. That is the mind’s version of healing. Healing is not a destination.

True healing involves drenching that very same ‘unwanted’ material within us with love, presence and understanding. It is love – kind, mindful, non-judgemental, warm and curious awareness - that truly heals even our deepest wounds. You can drop into this space of meditation wherever you are and whatever you are doing. **Every moment of your life, there is always the wonderful possibility** to slow down, breathe deeply, and get curious about where you are.

- **The miracle of breathing**

We can come out of our minds, drop out of the thought-constructed narrative of past and future, and touch the freshness and creativity of a single breathing moment. Let the breath be as it is. Rising and falling, rising and falling, like a wave in the ocean. For a moment, as you pay attention to what’s here and not caught up in the thought-constructed story of your life!

- **How true healing happens**

To the extent that we suppressed our true selves, we were all de-pressed, split and traumatized by our childhoods. As Jesus said in the Gospel of Thomas: “If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you”... and “If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you”. **We can take the risk of seeing ourselves, and being seen in return. Losing the image. Coming out of hiding.** The suppressed chaos, the mess, the ‘victim’ part of us, the lost child, can now come back into the present moment, and this time, instead of receiving shame and judgement and ridicule and attack, that very same material receives love, and breath, and understanding, and welcoming, and attention, and curiosity. Whatever is alive here, just for a moment, can you bless it with your undivided attention? Can you be here with this, without trying to fix it?

- **From depressed to deep rest**

Every human being on this planet, is exhausted on a deep soul level by their frustrated attempts to hold up an image, to play a character that isn’t really who they are. **We simply long to stop performing and be authentic again.** When we repress our true feelings, desires, urges, longings, banishing them into the unconscious, living as a mask in this world, playing a cartoon version of ourselves, we become depressed, lethargic, numb and even suicidal. The experience of depression is not a mistake, but a wake-up call. Depression was my unique call to discover the deepest kind of cosmic rest within myself. I started to question who I’d taken myself to be, and started to fall in love with the ground upon which I stood, the sacred ground of deep rest.

- **Stop waiting for abundance**

Don’t use a dream or a hope as an excuse to disconnect from where you are, because where you are is way too valuable. **Learn to love not having what you want right**

now. Drench a sense of 'lack' with curious awareness. Open your arms in gratitude, ready to receive whatever comes, ready to bless whatever leaves, this is the calling of true meditation.

- **Stop trying to fix me. Love me instead.**

When you try to fix me, you unintentionally activate deep feelings of unworthiness, shame, and failure within me. I can't help it. **I feel like I have to change to please you**, transform myself just to take away your anxiety, mend myself to end your resistance to the way I am. Without your pressure, your demand for me to abandon myself and be different, I can better see myself. Then I no longer feel smothered, a victim, **a little child to your expert adult**.

- **If you are feeling sad**

If you are feeling sad, **you are not in a 'low vibration'**. You are not sick or broken or unenlightened or far from healing. You are just feeling sad, that's all. It's a feeling state playing out on the vibrantly alive movie screen of presence, that's all. It's not a problem that requires a solution. **It's a sacred and precious part of you longing for love**, acceptance, embrace, rest.

- **The rupture and the repair**

First there is the rupture. The status quo is shattered. The old safety is gone. Old wounds are triggered, the pain body resurfaces, buried trauma erupts from the depths of the unconscious. And then you remember to breathe. You watch your thoughts spinning out of control, but you, as awareness, are not spinning out of control with them. The world may feel out of control but you are not. You are not the ever-changing mind, but the unchanging observer of it, and this realisation changes everything. And **you feel Afraid. Angry. Numb. Sad. Lonely. Unsafe. You have broken to heal**, ruptured to mend. Old energies have emerged only to be blessed with love, acceptance, tenderness, today; and there is only today.

You only ever have to deal with life a moment at a time. Please do not forget this. You can't go back to the way things were. You can't un-see what you have seen. But you can be present, right now. Staying close to yourself now, as your old world falls apart, walking this new and unknown path with trust and courage, slowly, mindfully, with care. Stepping into your new life, one step at a time, repairing your world with each step.

- **Even when we cannot hold ourselves**

I was speaking with a young man about embracing himself as he actually was, feeling his pain instead of running from it, living in the present, not in false hope. Discovering presence can be a shock to the system, can begin to reorganise the entire psyche, release deeply buried feelings, urges, longings, fears. Yes, it is scary to lose all your hope. You don't have to deny it any more, or act on it, just feel it now, for a moment. Breathe into it to get to total acceptance. His grief and rage had been met, for the first time ever I think, with love, understanding, acceptance. **Something seemingly**

by Jeff Foster

unlovable had been loved for the first time. It's amazing, the power of just staying present. Listening to what emerges. Doing less and trusting more. Allowing this person to go through what they have to go through, without trying to fix or save them. Through the hate, to the love. Through the grief, to the joy. Taking away the false hope, and perhaps leaving them with the dawn of a new hope.