

Stillness Speaks

(a summary by Pat Evert)

- Introduction

A true spiritual teacher does not have anything to teach. The only function of such a teacher is to help you remove that which separates you from the truth of who you already are and what you already know in the depth of your being.

- Silence and Stillness

Listening to silence awakens the dimension of stillness within yourself, because it is only through stillness that you can be aware of silence. Whenever you deeply accept this moment as it is —no matter what form it takes —you are still, you are at peace. Just look and just listen. No more is needed. **Being still**, looking, and listening activates the non-conceptual intelligence within you.

- Beyond the thinking mind

The human condition: lost in thought. In you, as in each human being, there is a dimension of consciousness far deeper than thought. It is the very essence of who you are. We may call it presence, awareness, the unconditioned consciousness. In the ancient teachings, it is the Christ within, or your Buddha nature.

The stream of thinking has enormous momentum that can easily drag you along with it. Every thought pretends that it matters so much. It wants to draw your attention in completely. Here is a new spiritual practice for you: don't take your thoughts too seriously. **The human mind**, in its desire to know, understand, and control, **mistakes its opinions and viewpoints for the truth**. However you interpret "your life" or someone else's life or behavior, however you judge any situation, it is no more than a viewpoint, one of many possible perspectives. But reality is one unified whole, in which all things are interwoven, where nothing exists in and by itself. Wisdom is not a product of thought. The deep knowing that is wisdom arises through the simple act of giving someone or something your full attention. Attention is primordial intelligence, consciousness itself. Whenever you are immersed in compulsive thinking, you are avoiding what is. You don't want to be where you are, Here, Now.

Dogmas —religious, political, scientific —arise out of the erroneous belief that thought can encapsulate reality or the truth. **What is this basic delusion? Identification with thought. Spiritual awakening is awakening from the dream of thought.** Prejudice of any kind implies that you are identified with the thinking mind. It means you don't see the other human being



anymore, but only your own concept of that human being. To reduce the aliveness of another human being to a concept is already a form of violence. Thinking that is not rooted in awareness becomes self-serving and dysfunctional. Cleverness devoid of wisdom is extremely dangerous and destructive. That is the current state of most of humanity.

The next step in human evolution is to transcend thought. This is now our urgent task. It doesn't mean not to think anymore, but simply **not to be completely identified with thought, possessed by thought**. Feel the energy of your inner body. Immediately mental noise slows down or ceases. Feel it in your hands, your feet, your abdomen, your chest. Feel the life that you are, the life that animates the body. The most significant thing that can happen to you is the beginning of a shift from thinking to aware presence. **Become at ease with the state of "not knowing."** This takes you beyond mind because the mind is always trying to conclude and interpret. It is afraid of not knowing. So, when you can be at ease with not knowing, you have already gone beyond the mind. Mastery of life is the opposite of control. You become aligned with the greater consciousness.

- The egoic self

When you think or speak about yourself, when you say, "I," it is a mind-made sense of who you are, conditioned by the past and seeking to find its fulfillment in the future. When each thought absorbs your attention completely, it means you identify with the voice in your head. Thought then becomes invested with a sense of self. This is the ego, a mind-made "me." That mentally constructed self feels incomplete and precarious. That's why fearing and wanting are its predominant emotions and motivating forces. Knowing yourself as the awareness behind the voice is freedom. The egoic self is always engaged in seeking. It is seeking more of this or that to add to itself, to make itself feel more complete. By giving your full attention to this moment, an intelligence far greater than the egoic mind enters your life. When you live through the ego, you always reduce the present moment to a means to an end. **When you give more attention to the doing than to the future result that you want to achieve through it, you break the old egoic conditioning.** Your doing then becomes not only a great deal more effective, but infinitely more fulfilling and joyful.

Almost every ego contains at least an element of what we might call "victim identity." Feel the emotional attachment you have to your victim story and become aware of the compulsion to think or talk about it. Be there as the witnessing presence of your inner state. You don't have to do anything. With awareness comes transformation and freedom. **Complaining and reactivity are favorite mind patterns through which the ego strengthens itself.** In your dealings with people, can you detect subtle feelings of either superiority or inferiority toward them? You are looking at the ego, which lives through comparison. If all else fails, you can strengthen your fictitious sense of self through seeing yourself as more unfairly treated by life or more ill than someone else. The ego needs to be in conflict with something or someone. That explains why you are looking for peace and joy and love but cannot tolerate them for very long. You say you

want happiness but are addicted to your unhappiness. Your unhappiness ultimately arises not from the circumstances of your life but from the conditioning of your mind. Such acts are simply expressions of unconsciousness, an evolutionary stage that we are now growing out of?

- The Now

This one moment —Now —is the only thing you can never escape from, the one constant factor in your life. No matter what happens, no matter how much your life changes, one thing is certain: it's always Now. Since there is no escape from the Now, why not welcome it, become friendly with it? When you make friends with the present moment, you feel at home no matter where you are. When you don't feel at home in the Now, no matter where you go, you will carry unease with you. Do you treat this moment as if it were an obstacle to be overcome? Do you feel you have a future moment to get to that is more important? It generates a constant undercurrent of unease, tension, and discontent. **Feel the aliveness within your body.** That anchors you in the Now, not to argue with what is. A simple but radical spiritual practice is to **accept whatever arises in the Now** —within and without.

The Now is deeper than what happens in it. It is the space in which it happens. **Your innermost sense of I Am has nothing to do with what happens in your life**, nothing to do with content. That sense of I Am is one with the Now. Don't let your sense of Being become obscured by circumstances, your stream of thinking, and the many things of this world. **I am not my thoughts, emotions, sense perceptions, and experiences.** I am not the content of my life. I am Life. I am the space in which all things happen. I am consciousness. I am the Now. I Am.

- Who you truly are

The Now is inseparable from who you are at the deepest level. There is something that matters more than anything else and that is finding the essence of who you are beyond that short-lived entity, that short-lived personalized sense of self. All the misery on the planet arises due to a personalized sense of "me" or "us." That covers up the essence of who you are. When you are unaware of that inner essence, in the end you always create misery. It's as simple as that. **When you don't know who you are, you create a mind-made self as a substitute for your beautiful divine being and cling to that fearful and needy self.** Time is useless, however, for the most essential thing in life, the one thing that really matters: self-realization, which means knowing who you are beyond the surface self —beyond your name, your physical form, your history, your story. You cannot find yourself in the past or future. **The only place where you can find yourself is in the Now.** You don't need time to be who you are. That is the very reason the illusion of egoic identity arose - because mentally you made yourself into an object. What happens or doesn't happen is not that important anymore. Things lose their heaviness, their seriousness. A playfulness comes into your life. You recognize this world as a cosmic dance, the dance of form - no more and no less. When you know who you truly are, there is an abiding alive sense of peace. You could call it joy because that's what joy is: vibrantly alive peace. **It is the joy of knowing yourself as the very life essence before life takes on form.** That is the joy of Being

- of being who you truly are. Pure consciousness is Life before it comes into manifestation, and that Life looks at the world of form through 'your' eyes because consciousness is who you are. When you know yourself as That, then **you recognize yourself in everything**. It is a state of complete clarity of perception. You are no longer an entity with a heavy past that becomes a screen of concepts through which every experience is interpreted. Through 'you' formless consciousness has become aware of itself. Most people's lives are run by desire and fear. Desire is the need to *add* something to yourself in order to 'be' yourself more fully. All fear is the fear of *losing* something and thereby becoming diminished and being less. These two movements obscure the fact that **Being cannot be given or taken away. Being in its fullness is already within you, Now.**

- Acceptance and Surrender

You are now free to give up the futile conflict between your inner state and your outer circumstances. How often each day do you say within, 'I don't want to be where I am'? In many cases the 'I don't want to be here' is not only useless, but also dysfunctional. It makes you and others unhappy. The habitual reactive 'no' strengthens the ego. 'Yes' weakens it. Your form identity, ego, cannot survive surrender. Can you detect even the slightest element within you of not wanting to be doing what you are doing? That is a denial of life. When you say 'yes' to the 'isness' of life, when you **accept this moment as it is**, you can feel a sense of spaciousness within you that is deeply peaceful. Neither happiness or unhappiness, however, go that deep anymore. **Surrender becomes so much easier when you realize the fleeting nature of all experiences and that the world cannot give you anything of lasting value.** You no longer demand that a situation, person, place or event should make you happy. Its passing and imperfect nature is allowed to be. When you completely accept this moment and no longer argue with what is, **the compulsion to think lessens and is replaced by an alert stillness. You are fully conscious.** Surrender comes when you no longer ask, 'why is this happening to me?' Even within the seemingly most unacceptable and painful situation is concealed a deeper good, and within every disaster is contained the seed of grace. **Acceptance of the unacceptable is the greatest source of grace** in this world. Sometimes surrender means giving up trying to understand and **becoming comfortable with not knowing**. Surrender, one could say, is the inner transition from resistance to acceptance, from 'no' to 'yes.'

- Nature

We have forgotten what rocks, plants and animals still know. **We have forgotten how to be - to be still, to be ourselves**, to be where life is: here and now. All things in nature are not only one with themselves but also one with the totality. They haven't removed themselves from the fabric of the whole by claiming a separate existence: 'me' and the rest of the universe. The playfulness and joy of a dog, its unconditional love and readiness to celebrate life at any moment often contrast sharply with the state of the dog's owner, depressed, anxious, burdened by problems, lost in thought, not present in the only place and only time there is: here and now. One wonders, living with this person, how does the dog manage to remain so sane, so joyous?

When you perceive nature only through the mind, through thinking, you cannot sense it's aliveness, it's beingness. You see form only and are **unaware of the life within the form** - the sacred mystery. **Thought reduces nature to a commodity to be used** in the pursuit of profit or knowledge or some other utilitarian purpose. The ancient forest becomes timber, the bird a research project, the mountain something to be mined or conquered. Watch an animal, a flower a tree, and see how it rests in being. It *is* itself. **Bring your attention to your breathing and realize that you are not doing it. It is the breath of nature.** If you had to remember to breathe, you would soon die, and if you tried to stop breathing, nature would prevail. When human beings become still, they go beyond thought. There is an added dimension of knowing, of awareness, in the stillness that is beyond thought. Nature can bring you to stillness. That is its gift to you. When you perceive and join with nature in the field of stillness, that field becomes permeated with your awareness. That is your gift to nature.

- Relationships

Your opinion of someone is not who they are, but only who they appear to be. When you pronounce judgment upon someone, you confuse those conditioned mind patterns with who they are. To let go of judgment does not mean that you do not see what they do. It means that you recognize that their behavior as a form of conditioning, and you see it and accept it as that. When you make the present moment the focal point of your attention - instead of using it as a means to an end - you go beyond the ego and beyond the unconscious compulsion to use people as a means to an end, the end being self enhancement at the cost of others. When you **give your fullest attention to whoever you are interacting with, you take past and future out of the relationship.** When you are fully present with everyone you meet, you **relinquish the conceptual identity you made for them** - your interpretation of who they are and what they did in the past - and are able to interact without the egoic movements of desire and fear. Attention, which is alert stillness, is the key. **How wonderful to go beyond wanting and fearing in your relationships.** Love does not want or fear anything. To know another human being in their essence, you don't really need to know anything about them - their past, their history, their story. We confuse knowing *about* with a deeper knowing that is non-conceptual.

Most human interactions are confined to the exchange of words, the realm of thought. **It is essential to bring some stillness, particularly into your close relationships.** No relationship can thrive without the sense of spaciousness that comes with stillness. Meditate or spend silent time in nature together. True listening is another way to bring stillness into the relationship. **When you truly listen to someone,** the dimension of stillness arises and becomes an essential part of the relationship. Far more important than what you are listening to is the act of listening itself, the space of conscious presence that arises as you listen, you are joined together as one awareness, one consciousness. Take note when ego arises, 1) the need to be right, 2) the sense of separation, and 3) accumulated emotional pain from the past. Become aware of it. Realize that it is not who you are, and recognize it for what it is: past pain. Witness as it happens in your partner or in yourself.

In relationships notice the other and give them your attention. **When you get attached to objects, you are using them to enhance your worth in your own eyes.** When there is self-identification with things, you don't appreciate them for what they are because you are looking for yourself in them. Through selfless appreciation of the realm of things, the world around you will come alive in ways that you cannot even begin to comprehend with the mind. Whenever you meet someone, no matter how briefly, **do you acknowledge their being by giving them your full attention?** Or are you reducing them to a means to an end, a mere function or role?

- Death and the eternal

Even in decomposition microorganisms are at work. Molecules are rearranging themselves. So death isn't to be found anywhere. There is only the metamorphosis of life forms. If you can learn to accept and even welcome the endings in your life, you may find that the feeling of emptiness that initially felt uncomfortable turns into a sense of inner spaciousness that is deeply peaceful. **By learning to die daily in this way, you open yourself to life.** As long as that form identity is all you know, you are not aware that this preciousness is your own essence, your innermost sense of *I Am*, which is consciousness itself. It is the eternal in you - and that's the only thing you cannot lose. Whenever death occurs, whenever a life form dissolves, God, the formless and unmanifested, shines through the opening left by the dissolving form. That is why the most sacred thing in life is death. That is why the peace of God can come to you through the contemplation and acceptance of death.

They have surrendered and so the person, the mind-made egoic 'me,' has already dissolved. They have 'died before they died' and found the deep inner peace that is the realization of the deathless within themselves. Suddenly, there is no more fear, **just peace and a knowing that all is well and that death is only a form dissolving.** Death is then recognized as ultimately illusory - as illusory as the form you had identified with as yourself. When you sit with a dying person, do not deny any aspect of that experience. Do not deny what is happening and do not deny your feelings. The recognition that there is nothing you can do may make you feel helpless, sad or angry. Accept what you feel. Then go one step further: accept that there is nothing you can do, and accept it completely. You are not in control. Deeply surrender to every aspect of that experience, your feelings as well as any pain or discomfort the dying person may be experiencing. Your surrendered state of consciousness and the stillness that comes with it will greatly assist the dying person and ease their transition.

- Suffering and the end of suffering

Nothing that happens is an isolated event; it only appears to be. The more we judge and label it, the more we isolate it. The wholeness of life becomes fragmented through our thinking. Yet the totality of life has brought this event about. It is part of the web of interconnectedness that is the cosmos. This means: whatever *is* could not be otherwise. **True freedom and the end of suffering is living in such a way as if you had completely chosen whatever you feel or experience at this moment.** This inner alignment with Now is the end of suffering. Much

suffering, much unhappiness arises when you take each thought when it comes into your head for the truth. Situations don't make you unhappy. They may cause you physical pain, but they don't make you unhappy. Your thoughts make you unhappy. Your interpretations, the stories you tell yourself make you unhappy. 'What a miserable day.' 'He didn't have the decency to return my call.' 'She let me down.' Little stories we tell ourselves and others, often in the form of complaints. When you are suffering, when you are unhappy, stay totally with what is Now. Unhappiness or problems cannot survive in the Now. Naming something as 'bad' causes an emotional contraction within you. When you let it be, without naming it, enormous power is suddenly available to you. Watch what happens when you don't name an experience as 'bad' and instead bring an inner acceptance, an inner 'yes' to it, and so let it be as it is. If you are in the habit of creating suffering for yourself, you are probably creating suffering for others too. These unconscious mind patterns tend to come to an end simply by making them conscious, by becoming aware of them as they happen. You cannot be conscious and create suffering for yourself.

Accept what is. You truly cannot? You are agitated and angry about this? Then accept what is. Accept that you are agitated and angry, that you cannot accept. Yes, **bring acceptance into your nonacceptance, surrender into your non-surrender**. Then see what happens. Yet if you can let go of that unwillingness, and instead allow the pain to be there, you may notice a subtle inner separation from the pain, a space between you and the pain, as it were. This means to suffer consciously, willingly. When you suffer consciously, physical pain can quickly burn up the ego in you, since ego consists largely of resistance.