

WHAT KEEPS US SANE?

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By Michael Erlewine (Michael@Erlewine.net)

Most of us do not think of ourselves as yogis or yoginis, but that does not mean we have not developed our own methods of inner clarity in this sometimes topsy-turvy world. We all meditate, although we may not call it that. One secret to staying sane in our too-busy life can be found in all the little habits and rituals we do every day. They are literally lifesavers.

Like windows in the fierce onslaught of time, we each have our little habits that help us look beyond time's rush, ritual lenses that allow us to clearly see through the whirlwind of the busy phenomena around us and into the true natural clarity of that phenomena. It is these moments of clarity that bring us peace each day. This process of seeing clearly for moments is the product of our little rituals. I am talking here of rituals that we have made up ourselves, ways of coping.

For some it may be doing crossword puzzles or the evening dishes, just tidying up, or going for a run. For others it is reading a book, watching a movie, or playing cards. There is no accounting for taste in the rituals we devise that enable the process of seeing through the opaqueness of a given day, as long as they work. We all have them and would go crazy without them. They punctuate our days with windows of clarity. For me it often is peering through a camera lens at a leaf or a flower or writing a blog like this. These are literally time-outs.

I press my eye close to the camera lens and it is clear in that moment that the seeing is what is important, and not what is seen through the lens. It is the process of seeing clearly, not the product of sight that shines, that brings clarity. The product is the process. How could I forget to remember this?

We all have these ritual habits, our crystal lenses into life through which we peer and frequently. Everything else is just appearances appearing, meaning nothing too much in themselves, and soon forgotten. Our ritual habits of each day are the means to see through all of this darkness clearly, and it is that clarity which shines and stabilizes the mind. Stability brings peace and I need some of it every day.

The rush of time each day is just wind in my eye and I can't see for beans. So I put my little eyepiece in (my viewer) and so do you, whatever ritual you use to see through what is happening to its real nature, that nature which is always clarity, as this little poem I wrote today speaks to.

INSIGHT

It is never,
What it is about,
But always about,
What it is ...

The clarity of,
This moment.

These little ritual habits that we enact each day are like windows in our busy time through which we gaze and clear our mind -- see clearly. And they are addictive (habits) because we want the relief they bring. This relief is identical in kind to what meditation practice brings on a larger scale, so please note that.

We all have these clarifying habits. We each have found our way of keeping sane in this modern world through pastimes and rituals that we enact as religiously as any Sunday school could ask. They are sacred to us, and to our health and well-being.

These rituals don't always work any more than a relaxing morning walk is always relaxing, and it is quite obvious when one of our rituals fails and we are not pacified. We have to look elsewhere for that release, for relief from the pressures of the time. Our ritual habits embedded in the rush of a busy day are like windows in time through which we gaze and allow the mind to rest. This is a form of meditation that we all practice.

What I am pointing out here is that we each already quite naturally have found methods to rest the mind, even if most are only momentary. The Tibetans have a great analogy, that of a monkey inside a house running from window to window and looking out. From every window he sees the sky, but he does not know that it is the same sky that is seen, no matter what window he runs to. In a way, that is how our little rituals work.

These ritual moments of clarity are cumulative and are like the windows in a house through which we can gaze out at the clear sky of the mind. There are many windows (many habits) through which we gaze, but only one sky that we see from any window. It is the same with our rituals. Although they all may be different, they all share in the same clarity, and are part of one inner mental sky. And here comes the interesting part:

Formal meditation training flips the above analogy. Instead of staring out from inside the house through many windows at the sky, we learn by meditating to transfer our consciousness (our identity) from inside our self and begin to identify rather with the entire sky, the awareness of the mind itself. This is worth thinking about for a moment.

In summary, we punctuate our current daily life with tiny rituals that keep us sane, windows in

our busy self through which we can see to the sky of the mind. We may not have put together that the clarity we see now in moments and glimpses is part of the larger sky, the nature of the mind itself. It is the clarity of the mind that we are seeing no matter what window or habit we are looking through. This alone is a realization.

When we become addicted to mental clarity, we can undertake formal meditation practice which reveals to us the single sky that we have been seeing through the many windows (moments) all our lives. That in itself is a big realization, but there is a kicker.

Through meditation practice, over time, we very gradually let go identifying solely with our self (and that view and viewer) and instead begin to identify with the entire sky of the mind. What were once moments of clarity we experience scattered throughout our day become a continuum of clarity that we increasingly identify with. We become the clarity itself and that becomes our view, and we the viewer.

This is transmigration, not when we die, but in this life, as we live.

Any comments or questions?

