

Mindfulness *in* Action

*Making Friends with Yourself
through Meditation and
Everyday Awareness*

Chögyam Trungpa

*Compiled, arranged, and edited by
Carolyn Rose Gimian*



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Touch and Go

At this point in our discussion I'd like to introduce some further instructions for the practice of meditation. These instructions could be especially useful in relation to the discussion of working with the emotions in this section of the book. The touch-and-go instructions were first introduced to be used by people attending a month-long practice retreat or a three-month practice and study retreat, so these instructions are attuned to issues that arise in the intensive practice of meditation. However, they are also applicable to daily practice and they help us in working with our daily lives, or mindfulness in action.

Attitude

As we've already discussed, in the practice of meditation there is an attitude that brings about possibilities of mindfulness. This attitude is not a matter of forming an opinion. Rather, it is directly cultivating the awareness of mind, which is precisely what mindfulness is. You are aware that your mind is aware of

yourself. In other words, you're aware that you're aware. You are not a machine; you are an individual person relating to what's happening around you.

Touch and Go

We could use the phrase "touch and go" to describe the cultivation of mindfulness and awareness. Mindfulness in this case is being mindful of the sense of being. The *touch* part is that you are in contact, you're touching the experience of being there, actually being there, and then you let *go*. This approach applies to awareness of your breath in the practice of meditation, and it also applies to awareness in your day-to-day living situation.

In the practice of meditation, touch and go works with how we directly *feel* our experience. The idea of *touch* is that you feel a quality of existence; you feel that you are who you are. When you sit down to meditate in a chair or on a cushion, you *feel* that you are sitting on your seat and that you actually exist. You are there, you are sitting, you are there, you are sitting. That's the *touch* part. The *go* part is that you are there, and then you don't hang on to it. You don't sustain your sense of being, but you let go of it.

With touch and go, there's a feeling of individuality, a feeling of yourself as a person. We are here; we exist. We feel this, directly and simply. Then, we let go, which is a sense of carelessness, of not feeling too much concern.

Working with Emotions

Then, there is a further *touch* that is necessary, which applies not only to awareness of a sense of being but also to the mindfulness of emotional states of mind. That is, one's mental state of aggression, lust, or whatever you are feeling has to be acknowledged. Those states should not just be acknowledged and then pushed off. You should actually look at them. This is an impor-

tant point. There should be no suppression or shying away. You have the experience of being utterly aggressive and angry, or being utterly lustful, envious, jealous, or whatever you feel. You don't just say, "Oh, it's okay. This is what's happening." Or, very politely, "Hi. Nice seeing you again. You are okay. Good-bye, I want to get back to my breath." That is like meeting an old friend on a train platform, someone you haven't seen in a while, who reminds you of the past, and saying to him or her, "Well, excuse me, I have to catch the train to make my next appointment." That attitude is somewhat deceptive.

In this approach to practice, you don't just sign off. You acknowledge what's happening in your state of mind, and then you *look at it* as well. The point is that you don't give yourself an easy time so that you can escape the embarrassing and unpleasant moments, the self-conscious moments of your life. Such moments might arise as memories of the past or the painful experience of the present. Or you may feel the pain of future prospects, what you're going to do after this. All those thoughts and feelings happen, and you experience them, you look at them, and only then do you come back to your breath.

This is extremely important to do. Otherwise, there is the possibility that we could twist the logic all around. If you feel that sitting and meditating, coming back to the breath, is a way of avoiding problems, that *is* the problem. You might feel your practice is extremely kosher, good, sensible, and real, and you don't have to pay attention to all those little embarrassments that happen around your life. You can regard them as unimportant and just come back to the breath. If you do this you are creating a patchwork; you are bottling up problems and keeping them as your family heirloom. Instead, it is important to look at those embarrassments and only then to come back to breath. And even then, after you have looked at them, there's no implication that, if you look at them, it's going to free you and provide an escape from one painful point to another, or that it's the end of the story.

In fact, most of the problems in life do not arise because you are an aggressive or lustful person. The greatest problem is that you want to bottle those things up and put them aside or patch over them, and you have become an expert in deception. That is the biggest problem. Meditation practice is supposed to uncover any attempts to develop a subtle, sophisticated, deceptive approach. It is designed to uncover those patches.

Working with the Breath

The attitude toward breathing in meditation is also related to working with touch and go. Once you are set properly in your posture, you begin to naturally focus on the breath going out of you. As the breath is going out, become the breathing. Try to identify with the breath, rather than watching it. This is the *touch* part. You are the breath; the breath is you. Breath comes out of your mouth and nostrils, goes out, and then dissolves into the atmosphere, into the space. You touch that process; you put a certain energy and effort toward that.

Then, as you breathe in, you boycott your breath; you boycott your concentration on the breath. That is the *go* part. As your breath goes out, let it dissolve. Then, just abandon it; boycott it. So breathing in is just space. Physically, biologically, one does breathe in, obviously, but you don't make a big deal of it.

Then another breath goes out—be with it. So the process is: out, dissolve, gap; out, dissolve, gap. It's constant opening, abandoning, boycotting. In this context *boycotting* is a significant word. If you hold on to your breath, you are holding on to yourself. Once you begin to boycott the end of the outbreath, it's as though there were no you and no world left, except that the next outbreath reminds you to tune in. So you tune in, dissolve, tune in, dissolve, tune in, dissolve. This is another way of saying touch and go, touch and go, touch and go.

Labeling Thoughts

As we know, many thoughts arise in the midst of practice. “Well, back at home, what are they doing?” “When should I do my homework?” “What should I write about next?” “What should I paint?” “What’s happening with my investments?” “I hate that guy who was so terrible to me.” “I would like to make love.” “What’s the story with my parents?” All kinds of thoughts arise naturally. If you have lots of time to sit, endless thoughts occur.

We have already talked about labeling thoughts as part of the practice of meditation. It is a very simple technique: we reduce everything to thinking. Having discussed relating to the emotions in terms of touch and go, we should address the importance of also labeling emotions as thinking. Usually if you have low-level mental chatter, you are willing to label this as thought. But if you have deeply involved emotional chatter, or fights and struggles in your mind, you call those *emotions*, and you want to give them special prestige. Acknowledging emotional states of mind through the technique of touch and go does not mean that emotions deserve special privileges in our practice. We might say to ourselves, “I’m actually angry, it’s *more* than my thought.” “I feel so horny, it’s *more* than my thought.” That can easily become self-indulgence or a means of avoidance, a way of avoiding the realm of actual mind. In the practice of labeling our thoughts, it’s important to view whatever arises as just thinking: you’re thinking you’re horny; you’re thinking you’re angry. As far as meditation practice is concerned, none of your thoughts are regarded as VIPs. You think, you sit; you think, you sit; you think, you sit. You have thoughts, you have thoughts about thoughts, and further thoughts about those thoughts. Call them thoughts. You are thinking, you are constantly thinking, nothing but thinking. Everything is included in the thinking process, the constant thinking process: thought, nothing but thoughts and thought patterns.

The Fringe of Our Emotions

In this chapter we are going to talk about how to work with our emotions from both a narrow egotistical point of view and from a more open perspective. The characterization of ego here basically highlights its confused and self-centered side. As we have seen in the previous chapter, when we are trying to maintain the illusion of a fixed, permanent self, or ego, we occupy ourselves by constantly looking for new ways to prove the validity of its existence. One of our most powerful strategies is our involvement with emotional projections. We use aggression, passion, ignorance, and other confused manifestations of our emotions as ways to maintain our story lines about ourselves.

Building up these projections is like creating a sculpture of a dog and then deciding to dress it up. We make a costume for it. We put different clothes on the dog, based on whether we decide it's a boy or a girl dog, and whether we decide it's a priest dog or a fashion model dog. We dress it up, and then we gaze and gaze at it. Then, suddenly, to our surprise, the dog begins to move. Why, if *we* made this sculpture, should it be able

to move on its own? It begins to haunt us. We created a naked dog, but then we decided to dress it up, which is laying further concepts or projections on it. To our surprise, our concept seems to take on a life of its own and begins to haunt us. You might say that's how we built New York City.

Sometimes our emotions produce dramatic upheavals. At other times, we feel quite calm, almost absent of any emotionality. However, no matter what is happening in our state of mind, ego wants to reinforce the undercurrent of the emotions flowing, because the energy of the emotions helps to fortify a bloated sense of self. To restate this: When we are filled with emotion, it seems that something, possibly something quite exciting, is happening and that there is a substantial entity at the center of the activity. When ego coopts the emotions in this way, they function like the limbs of ego's enlarged mental body, extending its reach and reinforcing its hold. Attaching the thought process to the emotions is the key here. Thoughts are employed as the veins and arteries that circulate the blood of ego through the limbs. Thoughts also function as the nervous system that carries impulsive messages back and forth from the limbs to central headquarters, the apparent heart and brain of ego.

Using thoughts in this way, ego hopes to become powerful and self-sufficient, generating its own energy, no longer needing to communicate or reach out to any foreign elements to maintain itself. Once this system is well established, then when there is an absence of emotional upheaval, ego generates its own dramas—so that even within a relatively calm state, fundamental panic and feelings of irritation and paranoia are generated, which cause us to initiate self-protective mechanisms. Ego's scheme is to appear constantly vulnerable to attack. When we feel this kind of vague vulnerability or anxiety, we guard ourselves and reinforce the whole area of ego. From ego's point of view, this is the ideal situation, creating a complete world that uses our thoughts and emotions to maintain our self-centeredness.

Meditation is a powerful tool to work with this pattern of projection. To cut through the efficient work of ego and dismantle the barriers it throws up to protect its central headquarters, we begin by working on the circulatory and the nervous systems of ego, that is, by working on the thought process. The complications and confusion of our thought process are there to ensure that ego's extremities, the conflicting emotions, remain securely connected to ego's heart and brain. If the efficiency of this system is disrupted and set into chaos, then it becomes easier to work directly on dismantling the fundamental structure of our egotism. By applying mindfulness, the basic technique of meditation, we bring the existing thought patterns into a simple situation, as opposed to the complicated one that ego has constructed. The practice we already have, the practice of meditation, undercuts ego's circulation system, its manipulation of the thought process. We do this by relating simply to posture, breathing, and labeling our thoughts.

We have many kinds of thoughts. There is the heavy-handedness of case-history thoughts. There are cunning foxlike thoughts and slippery fishlike thoughts, as well as grasshopperlike thoughts, leaping from one highlight to another. The way to work with all these aspects of our thought process is to simplify them into the basic practice.

This approach to meditation is not introspective or inwardly focused. If we try to work on ourselves by penetrating the depths or so-called deeper levels of thought, we may become introverted and we may intellectualize or complicate the whole process of meditation, rather than simplifying it. The tendency to centralize everything within ourselves by focusing on "me" and "my" and "my meditation" may be encouragement for the ego. It makes the ego feel that somebody is home, or somebody's at the office conducting business. This approach supports the illusion of centralized authority and efficiency within us.

To work with the problem of self-centeredness, the practice of meditation should get us out of the red tape of ego as

much as possible. The basic practice is to relate with sitting, breathing, and walking from the point of view of awareness. This approach is outward facing. It is engaging our actual living situation. In the practice of meditation, physical sensations, movements, and our breathing all relate with the environment around us, the world outside. These aspects of our practice aren't purely focused within the body.

Centralizing energy inside the body is trying to hold on to the energy, which may increase tension and tightness. In the end, a person may begin to hate himself, because he hates the struggle that he's going through. In extreme cases, he may even want to destroy himself, to release himself from this internalized experience.

The alternative, stepping outside the ego, is boycotting the centralized idea of oneself. This approach is a refreshing process of opening by applying the principle of right mindfulness. This is not just ordinary mindfulness but mindfulness that is right on the spot. This applies not only to formal meditation practice but also to everyday life, to mindfulness in action. Here, mindfulness is complete identification or oneness with your technique and your activity. You don't try to be mindful, but you recognize that you are in a state of mindfulness already. It is a way of working with yourself in which you become one with whatever techniques you are using.

In our daily lives there are many routine tasks that involve repeating an action over and over again: swimming laps, stacking wood, vacuuming, washing dishes, brushing our teeth, shoveling snow, filing papers in a drawer or on your computer. Any repetitive, routine activity can be an aspect of our mindfulness practice. These activities provide opportunities to begin working with mindfulness in everyday life. Eventually, all activities can be part of the practice of mindfulness in action. This is not a replacement for formal practice, but our daily lives should also not be separate from mindfulness.

If you identify with the action that you are repeating over

and over again, it can be an experience of mindfulness. You can experience being absolutely right there, on the spot and being one with the action. It is the expression of right mindfulness in ordinary life.

Applying mindfulness in everyday life makes our experience much more spacious, and it also brings an awareness of the whole environment. That is the sign or hallmark of developing insight: starting to see the situation as a whole. If you are stacking wood, you are not only mindful of piling one log on top of another, but you are also aware of the whole woodpile and the space around it. If you're swimming in a lake, you have an awareness of the whole expanse of the water. There is greater awareness, as distinct from simple mindfulness. Mindfulness is primarily the aspect of the technique that is being right on the spot, and awareness is feeling the environment around that mindfulness. Awareness is more panoramic.

If you are watching the road too intently when you drive on the highway, you might miss your exit, because you're only paying attention to the road in front of you and you don't see the exit signs. You may be watching the car in front of you and the car behind you very mindfully, but if you're not aware of the bigger space, you might miss your exit. New drivers are often very cautious, paying a lot of attention to the speed limit and being very mindful of other cars on the road. When you first learn to drive, that may be a very good idea. Eventually, however, in addition to being mindful of the details, you also need an overall awareness as you drive.

If you purchase a new automobile, when you first drive it, you are very caught up in how the car accelerates, where the gearshift is, what all the lights on the dashboard mean, and other little details. But as you get to know your vehicle, you begin to tune in to the size of the car and how it operates, how easy it is to accelerate or to stop, and things like that. At a certain point it's as though your awareness becomes one with the car, so to speak. It's as if the car is your body. You are no longer

calculating each movement, but you intuitively know how to handle your car, how to park it and drive it. You begin to feel as though the car is almost driving itself, rather than that you are driving the car. You feel that you are just making little adjustments to how it's driving. That's if you are a good driver. If you're a bad driver, then there will be lots of *you* involved in your driving.

In a similar way, in the practice of meditation, if you are tuned in to the environment, awareness or insight becomes part of your basic being, part of your ordinary behavior pattern. Awareness dictates to you, from that point of view. And at a certain point you may feel that you don't have to apply a technique in the formal practice of meditation. You almost feel as if meditation is conducting you rather than you are conducting the practice of meditation as such. You develop natural awareness as you start to relate to the total environment. This occurs as you become more acquainted with the practice and feel more relaxed with the breathing as well as other aspects of the technique.

The continuity of awareness links meditation practice with everyday life. Whether you're talking, eating, or walking—whatever you are doing takes place within a larger environment. With awareness, you recognize that you and your activities are all part of the environment. Connecting with the wholeness of the environment brings oneness with the action, making each activity more precise and direct. Then there's no room for ego's panic. You are able to cut the chaotic aspect of the thinking process, because at that point you are completely joined with the situation, not separate from what is there. That enables you to step out of the complicated thought process.

As this awareness expands, you also gain insight into your emotions. To begin with, you may only be able to approach the fringe of your emotions, not yet the heart of them. However, you are already able to see the emotions much more as they are, with their dynamic qualities and their simplicity as well. You

also see that there is more to the emotions than just the intense highlights. You become aware of the larger emotional environment, realizing that the emotions have to function in a wider space. Anger and hatred come out of an environment of aggression. Passion and grasping come out of an environment of seduction. As you see this larger space, the emotions no longer have a cloudy, mysterious quality, but they are part of a living situation. Then, eventually, the emotions can be seen in their complete perfection—which is something we'll talk more about in the next chapter.

But to begin with, we should understand how meditation practice is a simple way of stepping out of the neurotic and chaotic aspects of the thought process. We can simplify everyday life, as well as bring simplicity to the sitting practice of meditation. Relating to both practice and daily life as fully as possible, being right on the dot in terms of technique, will bring us into an open situation where we don't have to guard against anything or concentrate on anything, either. We find that the meditative aspect of the situation is there already. That is the basic principle of how meditation allows us to step out of fundamental self-deception.

This approach is not cutting off the thought process altogether but is loosening it up. Thoughts become transparent and loose, so that they can pass through or float around in our minds more easily. Thoughts are often very heavy and sticky, and they hang around, demanding that we pay attention to them. But with this approach, the thought process becomes relaxed and fluid, fundamentally transparent.

In this way, we learn to *relate* to our thought process, rather than trying to attain a state without thoughts altogether. Thoughts have fundamental intelligence and energy to them, so you don't want to cut off the thought process. Rather, thoughts maintain their energy, but they become less solid and less irritating.

When our thoughts are less connected to maintaining egotistic self-centeredness, we appreciate life much more fully. Existence seems more colorful and beautiful. In terms of the projection of the dog that we started with, when you realize its nonexistence, you gain much greater appreciation for the real thing, the real dog.

It is like the difference between plastic and real flowers. Real flowers are much more beautiful, in part because of their impermanence. People appreciate the seasons, the autumn and the spring, because the seasons are a process of change. Each season is a precious time. In this way, impermanence is beauty.

We could also call this living quality *nowness*. *Nowness* is so fresh. It has nothing at all to do with the past or the future. It is absolutely pure, primevally pure. The present is right here.

The Heart of Emotion

There is no such thing as an ideal state of meditation. Awareness allows us to relate to our mental processes and to see the fundamental expression of mind as it is, including our thoughts. The meditator may find that many thoughts recur during the meditative state. These thoughts should be seen as waves on the ocean. They are part of our intelligence. When they aren't armed or heavy-handed anymore, they have a transparent quality. Thoughts also develop an evenness when we recognize that, fundamentally, nobody is trying to fight against anything.

From this experience we learn a different way of looking at life. Life is no longer warfare. Rather, it contains a quality of dance, and we develop an appreciation for its flowing process. With that basic attitude, we find that it's quite easy to relate to thoughts. Nothing is being conquered, and nothing has to be destroyed. Instead we develop a friendly attitude toward ourselves and toward our thought process. We realize that nothing has to be subdued or suppressed.

Seeing the transparent quality of things as they are brings

us into a new dimension of life. It also brings an absence of aggression and speed, so that finally we are able to fully enter into the territory of our emotions, both in their conflicted and in their pure state. We have discussed how the practice of meditation works with the thought process in dealing with the fringe of our emotional structure. The emotions are the basic mechanisms that trigger grasping or a battle mentality. Being friendly to ourselves, nothing has to be regarded as gain or loss, hope or fear, anymore. In our meditation practice, things are then easy and smooth, accompanied by a certain amount of discipline.

This also makes our projections less heavy-handed. Usually the projections tend to haunt us, and we feel that either we have to conquer them or we have to give in to them. That attitude is based on distrusting ourselves, not having a compassionate attitude toward ourselves. Often we think of compassion in terms of feeling sorry for someone or thinking that we are in a superior position to someone who needs our help. Here we are speaking of basic, fundamental compassion. The quality of this unconditional compassion is warmth and spaciousness. We don't have to push ourselves into extreme situations anymore, because we contain a spacious situation within ourselves. So nothing has to be pushed, and we can afford to let ourselves be.

This doesn't mean to say that a compassionate person will be very subdued and deliberate, speaking or acting slowly all the time. That kind of deliberate gentleness and slowness is a physical façade. It is not fundamental warmth and gentleness.

The discovery of compassion brings an understanding of the emotions as they are. The emotions become a decentralized process rather than a central force to maintain confusion. The emotions have their own space and their own creative process. When you realize this, you can actually become one with the emotions.

It's very tricky to talk about this. Becoming one with our emotions is not acting out or indulging in them, but it is connecting with the experiential quality of the emotions as they

are. Trying to either subdue the emotions or put them into practice, by acting them out, is really two sides of the same coin. Both approaches are trying to escape from our real emotions, because we can't relate to them in their true nature. We think that we have to do something about them, either bottle them up or explode out with them. This is, as we've already discussed, largely based on not having enough faith or trust in ourselves—fundamentally not having a kind attitude toward ourselves.

The more intense our emotions, the more reason we have to get to the heart of the matter. However, we often feel that there is something terribly wrong with our feelings. For example, our anger may seem almost evil. There is something terrifying about it, which makes it seem impossible to relate to. We distrust ourselves. We think we might do something foolish if we allow ourselves to fully experience our anger. In fact, it's the opposite.

When we don't trust ourselves, we do random things to avoid our emotions. "Me" and "mine" and "my desires" or "my problems" seem outrageously overpowering. We feel that we have to do something about our feelings. However, when you are feeling angry, you don't have to act out your anger, say, by getting into a fight with someone. Nor do you have to suppress your anger, trying to forget it by going shopping for a new hat. There's another way, which is to actually relate to the bubble of energy that arises. This is connecting with an almost abstract quality of the emotions. By abstract, I mean the feeling that the emotions are almost an independent force, a primal energy. You relate to that simple, most basic quality of emotion, its abstract aspect, rather than getting involved in all the projections. You can almost see the visual, colorful aspects of your anger, the redness of it, the hotness of it. If you can experience that basic quality of emotion thoroughly, you begin to realize that it's not such a big deal anymore.

We don't see the emotions in their own true state because

we don't trust that we have the insight or the sensibility to relate to them that directly. Even if we have a sudden insight about how we might do so, we automatically seal off that thought, that possibility of understanding them.

The essence of the emotions is primordial wakefulness. That's a very powerful way of looking at them. We might think of mind as wakeful, as containing wakeful intelligence, but not the emotions, because we distrust them. We often see them as something overpowering, unnecessary or dreadful, something that we should cast off or find some way of getting rid of. But in fact, the basic nature of the emotions is that they are awake in themselves. They are like a snake curled to strike that unwinds itself in midair. That is the transcendental quality of the emotions, when we trust ourselves and we really enter into the emotions completely.

When we are not able to approach the emotions in their own true nature, they tend to cause all sorts of casualties, on the fringes of emotion. Emotional outbursts have a lot of speed or intensity. When they are spinning around, and when you just touch the fringe, you are pushed away, cast off.

The alternative is getting into the heart of emotion. For instance, the point of aggression is to arouse anger and hatred. If there is a "you" as a central person, a central reference point, your anger will overpower *you*. But if you become completely part of the anger, if you get into the *is-ness* of the anger, then anger's ability to overpower you disappears. There's no one there to overpower. Then anger becomes just a bundle of energy.

To take another example, the point of fear is to frighten you. If you become part of the fear completely, right in it, then fear has no one to frighten. So it's a question of absolutely getting into the heart of the matter.

Another way of seeing this is that you lose the concept of fringe and center altogether, in terms of your experience of your emotions or your identity as a whole. When you have a

sense of being at the center, right in the middle or in command of an experience, you should regard the center as including the fringe of your experience as well. Sometimes you can only touch the fringe of an emotion or an experience, which might mean that something is threatening and you're trying to keep it at a distance. At that point, try to regard the fringe as also being right at the center. If the fringe becomes the center and the center becomes the fringe, there is no conflict between the two at all. There is no conflict within you or within your experience at that point. That is how the snake unwinds itself in midair. The emotions free themselves, rather than your trying to find a way to alter or destroy them.

We have to deal with the heart of the matter, the heart of situations. We have to work with both the cause and with the seeds of whatever develops in our life, rather than immediately jumping to conclusions. At the heart of the emotions we find emptiness, actually. When we realize that the forces at the fringe are also the center, we realize how much space there is. It is everywhere, all the time. And wherever there is space, space *is* the center in itself, as well as the fringe in itself, because there is no way to divide space into pieces. That realization breaks down the barrier of duality of "me" and "my projections" completely. There's no solid wall between us and our projections anymore. The wall between the two has been removed, because it never really existed. Finally we are able to perceive things without concept, without conceptualizing and judging, and without extreme emotional reactions. Things are seen as they are, because there's no fear of losing control of the center or control of the fringe. They have already been pacified or seen through.

This experience enables us to relate with other things in our everyday life. Whatever we perceive or experience in life is spacious, full, and complete when we don't have ulterior motives. If you don't perceive things with hunger anymore, your basic sense of poverty is removed. You trust things as they are.

This enables a person to act skillfully as well. Here, when we talk about skillful action, it's a question again of trusting in space, trusting the basic qualities of things as they are, rather than being skillful in creating or strategizing a particular outcome. Without ulterior motives, you can relate very accurately to situations. It's almost as though you yourself are a good speedometer that registers the speed of your vehicle or a good thermometer that registers the temperature of a situation accurately and precisely. You automatically become an accurate or skillful part of the process. From this point of view, if you are trying to be very clever by planning or reorganizing something, you are heading for complication and confusion.

Ignorance is refusing to accept things as they are, trying to impose a secondary meaning or trying to interpret things according to your wishes. When you artificially try to reinterpret something, your intelligence becomes feeble and freezes up. This frivolous intelligence binds itself, like a silkworm that binds itself with its own silk thread. You are creating your own bondage. When you see the absence of the barrier of duality, there is no room to be cunning or clever. There's no purpose to it, when things have been seen through thoroughly.

Rather, you begin to enjoy the details of your life as part of your path. When your journey is informed by meditative insight, then whatever happens in life becomes living insight. Situations themselves begin to act as reminders. They shake you, they slow you down, they warn you, or they may inspire you.

If we become more generous and open by removing the fundamental obstacle, or our façade, we are much more kind and loving to ourselves. Then our outside projections become kind to us as well. So the whole world becomes a loving world, one without aggressive conflict. Therefore, you discover that the world is filled with compassion. This inspires you to be friendly to others and to try to help them. You aren't trying to convert them to your ego. That approach doesn't apply anymore. Rather,

because you see the other person's situation as it is, your chemistry and the other person's chemistry mingle together extremely well, absent any elements of aggression or passion.

I wouldn't call this an absolute state without extreme emotions. You could still have your emotional upheavals, but you also could have glimpses of openness. Those glimpses help you to become a more awake, open, and generous person. These glimpses of openness and generosity become the working basis, because they contain the qualities of compassion and skillful action. Then, each moment is a unique and beautiful opportunity to work on yourself. You don't want to miss the boat. Each moment is precious.