

From: "Turning suffering inside out: A zen approach to living with physical and emotional pain" by Darlene Cohen

CONTROLLING YOUR SHEEP OR COW

"To give your sheep or cow a large, spacious meadow is the way to control him. It's the same with taking care of your every day life. Even though you try to put people under some control, it is impossible....Just...watch them without trying to control them.... it is the same with various images you have in your mind. Let them come and let them go. Then they will be under control....The true purpose of zen is to see things as they are, to observe things as they are, and to let everything go as it goes. This is to put everything under control in its widest sense." (From chapter entitled, Control, in "Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind" by Shunryu Suzuki)

...A big part of what you must learn if you are to be less worried about controlling everything is how to let go of your compulsive need to feel in control. You would be better off making the effort it takes to learn when to stop making effort, when to allow things to just happen, just simply let your impulses come forth. This is the art of cultivating faith in your intuition, learning to trust in your inherent wisdom.... I believe that developing the capacity to tolerate not-knowing mind allows what we call "intuition" to evolve. This is the metabolite of body wisdom, the availability to our conscious mind of the benefits of the insight and experience assimilated by both body and mind in all our years of making choices and allowing opportunities.

Dainin Katagiri described "not-knowing" mind in the following way:

"As long as you are a human being, you're right in the middle of the situation of not understanding anything because life is vast, because it is the truth. Truth or vastness or emptiness is very rich but you cannot name it. All you can do is to practice, receive and accept that full richness. There's no way to know this, but you were already there, so first accept this fact. The point you have to know is that you are right in the situation of not understanding anything."

... In the stress-reduction classes I conduct at hospitals, people sometimes protest that I'm not giving them a series of solid, easily grasped techniques to reduce stress. Instead, it's just this nebulous meditation practice. Some people are extremely uncomfortable with this and wonder whether they're learning anything useful. It's very hard for most of us to think about anything without being goal-directed. We see our stress as a problem to be overcome and eliminated, like hemorrhoids. We want to reduce stress, plain and simple, not merge with it, not study it, not hold it in meditative equipoise. We think that whatever we're going to learn to conquer our stress, it should be definite, graspable. It's difficult for us to live in the realm of not knowing, just giving everything in front of us our whole attention and suspending our worry about what comes next until it arrives. We need to cultivate a lot of faith to live that way. But this

attitude may be the most intimate and satisfying connection we could ever have with our lives. Not to know exactly what's going to happen but to do, feel, anyway.

As for me, I find that the not-knowing space is definitely part of my creative process. When I'm working on a particular problem I'm trying to solve, whether it be how to schedule the activities in a workshop or how to comfort a client in pain, the experimental attitude, and not-knowing mind, the tentative mind that will entertain many possibilities, is very satisfying space for me. Yes, I love the illusion of certainty, that solid, no-nonsense, take-charge feeling. But what a breather when my thoughts rummage freely in my mind, loosened for a time from their usual tight morning to their little tried-and-true categories. If we can learn to be at all comfortable with that state of mind, we certainly will come to value its true and accurate relationship to the realities of this life.

...When everything is beyond your speculation, there's nothing else you can do but take care of what's right in front of you right now. This is trusting in the connection you feel to your own activity rather than to any results of it. Not that you don't want results, not that you don't care about your future security, but right here in this moment, you engage with your life because you are alive and crave to be connected to everything. Just because you were alive, just because you are a human being, you raise your banner of truth (ie, engage with your life, embrace it wholeheartedly as it unfolds) wherever you are, without anticipating any result or expecting that you will be able to control something through the raising of your banner. The control is something extra. Just to do something without any expectation is enough. You do it because it is there to be done. Food to cook, dishes to wash, children to nourish....You can do all of these things without anticipating any results. In fact, if you try washing the dishes fully present for the motions you were making and the sensations you are feeling as the hot, sudsy water spills over your fingers, revealing the pattern of your dishes, you may find that's enough. The clean sink at the end is icing on the cake.