

Using Attention
for
Extraordinary Knowing

What Are We Doing Here?

- Together we will explore how our attention works
- We will examine another type of attention that leads to a radical shift in what we can know about each other and ourselves
- This is an interactive workshop—questions and comments will be welcome throughout.

A First Question

- What did you notice and experience when you first entered the room where we are now seated?
 - ★ Hint: There is no correct answer
- Can you reconstruct what caught your attention; what you were experiencing; what you were feeling; the thoughts that emerged in response to what you were experiencing?
 - ★ Were you paying attention?
- To what else might you have paid attention but did not?.

The Psychic-Emotional 'Tone'

- All places and living beings are surrounded by a 'Field'
- In living beings I call this the 'Bio-Field'
 - ★ Call this the 5th fundamental force—seen only in higher-level organization such as living organisms
- This 'Field' creates a 'Tone', or quality, that affects the 'Fields' of all who come into contact with it
- The 'Field' and its 'Tone' have embedded information that can be known by any creature that also has a 'Field'
 - ★ It takes a 'Field' to know a 'Field'.

The Person Who Sets The 'Tone'

- Every physical space has a psychic-emotion 'field' that gives it a particular quality apart from physical form
- Humans profoundly affect that 'tone' and can change it—but not always.
- Human interactions are profoundly affected by the 'tone' of the place, which affects the people there, which affects the place...*ad infinitum*.

Attention & POV

- Your Point-of-View is determined by your learned habits of awareness
- Big things can be happening—like someone ‘driving’ a group—without you noticing
- Ever lose something that you had minutes ago?
 - ★ Every time you lose something, it’s because you were not paying attention to what you were doing when you put it away.

Attention Habits

How Do We Come To Possess a Fixed Attention
and a Rigidly Held Point-of-View?

Fixed Attention

- This is the most common state in which we find ourselves
- This way of attending to the world creates a fixed Point-of-View (POV), which narrows possibilities for knowing
- Such a POV can be functional or dysfunction, depending on context and use.

Radical Disconnectedness

- Widespread shutdown in a sense of personal connectedness among individuals and within communities
- Failure to maintain bonds of empathic knowing
- I have called this process of self-encapsulation and self-focus, *radical disconnectedness*
- *In effect, we have an interpersonally and intrapersonally stunted population attempting to do high-level people-centric tasks.*

Early Training—“Pay Attention”

- You are taught *what* to pay attention to and *how* to be aware by:
 - ★ *Family*
 - ★ *Friends*
 - ★ *School*
 - ★ *Culture*
- The language you speak determines what you believe is real and how you know it.

Self-Training

- Doing the same thing over and over again whether or not it works
- Internal dialogue—keeping your story alive
- Refusing to consider the opposite of what you already believe
- Never stopping to “smell the roses”
- Paddling on that famous river—*de Nile*.

FEAR

- Our lives are conducted much like cows grazing in a familiar field
- When we move too near the periphery and feel the buzz in the air from the electric fence, we automatically, without much thought, start moving back toward the safer center
- Any disturbance to our routines or beliefs is *normalized* as quickly as possible
- *This is all done to keep our awareness fixed and undisturbed.*

We Are Story Tellers

- We create the story of:
 - ◆ *What is real*
 - ◆ *Who we are*
 - ◆ *What's going on*
 - ◆ *How we need to respond to our own story*
- Our stories get to be fixed in place and maintained
 - ◆ *The way we use our attention is critical to this process.*

Changing Attention Habits

Learning to Perceive in New Ways

Our Primary Attention Styles

- The 'Watcher' or 'Witness'
 - ◆ *In this style we just observe and notice—no attraction or repulsion.*
- The 'Judge' or 'Evaluator'
 - ◆ *This style is one of cognitive & emotional evaluation, labeling, categorizing and deciding on good, bad, etc.*
- The 'Paranoid' or 'Reactor'
 - ◆ *Here our emotional reaction spins into hyperdrive causing either fear and repulsion or attraction and obsession.*

Re-Deploying Attention

- Disrupt attention by shifting awareness to something in what we consider to be the *background*
- Noticing our mental content and emotional state *immediately after attention is shifted*
- Noticing *themes* of our attentional habits that emerge from regular practice of simple re-deployment.

The Power of Re-Deployment

- Our old 'story' is *disrupted* leaving an opening for something new
- Inner 'space' is *created* for fresh perception of self & others
- A re-framing of knowing occurs—we see *self and other afresh*
- Understanding of meaning and relationship deepens
- *Consciousness expands to create a more panoramic knowing.*

Point-Of-View Shifts

- When our POV shifts, our world starts to be informed by a more panoramic picture and a richer view of life
- Moving between POVs becomes more fluid and we become more flexible in our knowing
- We start to recognize reality as beyond any given POV
- *No matter how misanthropic we are by nature or training, we become more compassionate.*

Soto Zen Buddhist POV

- "This is the mystery. When you understand one thing through and through, you understand everything. When you try to understand everything, you will not understand anything. The best way is to understand yourself, and then you will understand everything... Through the teaching we may understand our human nature." Suzuki-roshi
- "There is no body and no mind... Everything is just a flashing into the vast phenomenal world." Dogen-Zenji.

In Summary

- *How we deploy our attention determines what we know*
- *What we know determines what we believe*
- *What we believe determines who we are*
- ✨ *Change how you use your attention and you change who you are*
- *The process of learning to use attention more flexibly leads to a fluid point-of-view;*
- *A fluid point-of-view is the basis of the deepened awareness and perspective at the heart of spirituality;*
- ✨ *It is through mastering the technology of consciousness that we open the door to personal and spiritual development.*