
MEDITATION CLASS

Cosmology is Optional

From Don't Just Do Something, Sit There by Sylvia Boorstein

You can practice mindfulness without any concern about compromising your religious beliefs or affiliations. It is true that the Buddha had a cosmology that might be different from yours, and it is true that Buddha taught mindfulness as a main practice, but he didn't teach that cosmology and mindfulness were interdependent.

The Buddha taught that mindfulness is the direct antidote to suffering because it leads to wisdom. I like to think of mindfulness practice as a way of becoming wise and being wise at the same time.

The becoming wise part is a gradual process. By paying attention calmly, in all situations, we begin to see clearly the truth of life experience. We realize that pain and joy are both inevitable and that they are also both temporary. We remember, more and more often, that struggling causes suffering and that compassionate, considered responses make life manageable. Sometimes we forget. The long-term goal of practice is to never forget.

The being wise part of mindfulness practice happens as we act now, in this very moment, on the way to never forgetting. Mindfulness practice cultivates the habit of not getting angry with life because it isn't happening in the way we'd like. Unpleasant situations call for balanced responses. Anger is extra. Mindfulness practice also cultivates the habit of enjoying pleasant experiences while they last without lamenting their passing. Camera film ads notwithstanding, we cannot capture the moment. Mindfulness practice means acting as if we were already enlightened.