

Everyday Lessons

From the moment we wake up in the morning to the moment we settle in at the end of the day, we are afforded so many authentic places to practice. Every experience of hardship provides fertile ground in which we can root our practice.

– Justin von Bujdoss, “Ask a Teacher”

This beautiful, everyday life that you are living with your loved ones is truly ALL that is needed to grow and become the best version of yourself. Every day is a fresh start, every moment a new and authentic opportunity to grow.

I’ll admit it, I just experienced a “hit my limit moment” with my darling 17-year-old son. I am sure this is shocking to hear, especially if you, too, have raised or been a teen. Seventeen is such a smooth and easy age, right? It turns out that is not true. I’ve personally discovered that there are two particularly challenging periods of being a teen. These periods seem to occur just upon the transition to the teen years and then again for an excruciatingly long stretch between the ages of 17 and 20 years. While discussing the specifics of what was so excruciating today might be really fulfilling for me at this moment, I will actually set out to share how the last hour or so provided me with countless lessons. The lessons were clear and tangible because I was willing and able to give the situation some time and space.

My experience went something like this. “Fill in the blank” discussion begins innocently, yet quickly hits a point of a standoff. If it were to continue, it would surely escalate and serve no one. We, fortunately, have learned to call it off and each head to our personal spaces, not without just a little bit of foot-stomping (absolutely not me).

Then came the challenging part.

1. Really stopping and not following up with all of the snarky comments that came flooding into my head (and I am sure, his)
2. Cooling down
3. Considering what was underneath my frustration, what emotion was driving this confrontation and sitting with that emotion until it dissipated
4. Considering what might be underneath his frustration and some questions I might ask to help me understand his position

While this looks like a lot of processing it actually happened within a span of 30 minutes or less. I then got myself a cup of tea and did something entirely unrelated.

Within an hour we met up again, my son initiating it this time, which was a cause for celebration itself. In a short stretch, we each listened to one another and found an agreeable place in which we could park the topic for now. So there was not a full resolution, but we found a place in which we both could find some comfort and were able to get back to relating with one another with ease.

In this everyday experience, I learned that sometimes my son I can both fear the same thing but for different reasons. I learned that having a better understanding of his perspective reduces my fear. I also learned that when I get caught up in what's not working, I lose sight of all the things that are going well, and I can choose where I want to place my focus.

This simple yet very real story is an example of mindfulness off the cushion... and an everyday lesson. You, too, can reap these benefits from a short and sweet daily meditation practice. While getting to and sitting on that cushion is a story in itself, the rewards of that practice look just like I described above. It's the skill to become an observer of yourself and of others, and the ability to question the story you are telling yourself. Instead of letting your emotions

roll you into a place that is limiting and without perspective, try something different. Try stepping back, physically, as I did with my son if that is possible. If not, do so internally by checking in on your breath and placing your focus there. Then, check in with some other possible story lines. Are there other ways this story could end than the one you have created? Finally, find the courage to say, "Hey I don't like the way we left this. Is there a way we could move forward?" That last step does take courage but is the most important in our personal growth.

So what do you think? Are you ready to tune into your day and the lessons within your reach?