

IT'S LIKE RIDING A BIKE

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By Michael Erlewine (Michael@Erlewine.net)

Before we jump into the riding-the-bike photo and analogy let's talk about "awareness." We know the Sanskrit word "Buddha" basically means "awakened one" or one who is aware. So what is awareness?

How aware are we? Of course we are all aware, but it is a question of to what degree. And we all have times of real awareness, but too often they are fleeting and we don't even realize when we lose that awareness and slip back into distraction only to wake back up days, months, or even years later. We realize then that we have been here before, been aware like this before, but where were we in between when we were not aware?

We were asleep or distracted, lost in our freight train of thoughts or just plain absent - AWOL. The gaps or time-outs in our awareness can be huge. And now we can bring in the bike analogy.

Meditation practice is something like riding a bike in that unless you plan to fall off it you need to be aware enough to stay on it, to keep with it. And life is no different! We might like to be aware of our life as well, which is why we practice meditation.

In traditional meditation practice there are two limits at which point you are no longer practicing. One of course is when we doze off, tune out, and otherwise ignore our awareness and the other when we become too excited or distracted to meditate or concentrate at all. Either way any awareness vanishes. These then are the two extremes and our actual awareness is usually somewhere in the middle. When we meditate we have to guard against falling prey to these two extremes. They wait for us. There are antidotes but they may have to wait for another blog.

The kicker is that it is not only while sitting in meditation that this is true, but also in life itself. Keep in mind that the only reason we practice meditation is to become more aware so that we can be present in our lives – be here now. And let's not confuse awareness with mindfulness. They are distinct.

Awareness is the result of our meditation practice, just being more aware. "Mindfulness" (being mindful) is how we remember or know when we are not being aware, how we know when we have drifted off from awareness. Mindfulness is the guardian of awareness, but not awareness itself. However they work together like hand and glove.

Just as we would not like to fall asleep while riding a bicycle or get too distracted while riding so that our eyes are no longer on the road, the same is true in our life. If we fail to be aware of our own life (and it passes) what are we left with? We won't even know the answer to that question because we were not there. We were gone somewhere and we can't even remember where. Time passed between our moments of awareness. As the old Dylan song says "Something is happening here, but you don't know what it is, do you Mr. Jones?"

Sitting meditation may be what we do each day to build the habit of mindfulness to help keep us aware, but awareness is not something we only need part-time. We need to be aware full-time and mindfulness ever increasingly closes the gaps when we are gone until (with enough

practice) we are mindful all the time and therefore have awareness all the time. However, it takes effort to build a habit of mindfulness. One good thing is that the curve to being aware is exponential, not linear.

In other words, meditation is hard to make a habit of in the beginning, but catches fire as we go along and finally becomes incendiary and self-sustaining. You can count on that. But we first have to get the ball rolling.

For those who are interested in this topic, please check out this free booklet "Training the Mind" here:

<http://astrologysoftware.com/books/index.asp?orig>

