

LOVING, KNOWING, AND GROWING

Growing with Rick Hanson: Part 1 Meditation

So let's try a little experiential practice. This will be pretty brief. A few minutes, maybe five minutes or so. There are two ways to have a beneficial experience. One way is the most common one. We just notice what we're already feeling. There's a moment of gratitude you're already having. Maybe you get something done and there's a sense of satisfaction in completing it. Maybe you just kind of look out the window and you feel a little calmer, a little more relaxed, a little happier. It's already occurring.

The other way to have a beneficial experience is to deliberately call one out. For example, to deliberately call up compassion for someone in trouble, or compassion for yourself, or deliberately call up a feeling of strength in your own body when you've got to deal with maybe someone who's being kind of obnoxious.

So both are OK and it's really OK to deliberately create a beneficial experience. And then once you're having that experience, there's the opportunity for internalizing it, so that we can develop that quality increasingly inside ourselves as on the path of growing. So I'll do this experiential practice with you in two ways.

First, we'll focus on an experience you're already having. And then second, I'll suggest an experience for you. Here we go.

So right now, notice that as you exhale, your body is always naturally relaxing a little bit. This is because the parasympathetic branch of the nervous system handles exhaling and naturally slows the heart rate. So I'll be quiet for a few moments here as you become more aware of the natural relaxation that's occurring during exhalation.

So then, as you start to have more of a sense of relaxing that's naturally occurring, focus more upon it. Stay with the feeling of relaxing as you exhale, and there might also be a sense of relaxing naturally available to you present in inhaling also.

Feeling relaxation in your body.

Maybe having a sense of it's spreading inside, like a warmth.

And being aware of some of what feels good about this. Really enjoying it.

Great. That was the first of two little mini practices. And I'll explain what was probably going on in your brain, to some important extent, when you were doing that. But first, let's do the second mini practice. And for this one, I invite you to create an experience of gratitude.

Bringing to mind one or more things that you feel thankful for.

And as you are aware of people, events, situations that you feel thankful for, help yourself start having more of a feeling of gratitude. There might be a sense of giving yourself over to a feeling of gratitude.

Letting yourself become grateful. Even more. As a way of being.

You can be aware of why being more grateful, in general, is personally relevant for you. Why it's important for you to kind of rest in a trait of greater thankfulness. Why would that be valuable for you, perhaps especially these days?

OK, so that's the end of the second mini-practice.