

Snowfall

Be attentive to what is arising within you, and place that above everything else,

What is happening in your innermost self is worthy of your entire love.

Somehow you must find a way to work at it.

- Rainer Maria Rilke

Letters to a Young Poet

The snowfall has arrived. It is like the first snowfall to have ever graced the planet. Gentle, quiet, beautiful. A soft pine landscape meets me through my cabin window, suggesting that I come outside when I'm ready to feel cold snow flakes land on my face, to be immersed in their crystalline nature. A spray of white powder descends, loosened from its nest on a high tree branch. It is joined by others and a faint wall of white appears, expands and disperses.

My mind seeks distraction: phone calls, laundry, e-mails. And yet the greater part of me remains here, inviting me to feel this simple joy and untroubled restfulness as it percolates through my body. It is all I want in this moment.

It is not always this way. We are led to believe that constant distraction is a requirement for modern life. And yet presence is perhaps the most essential quality of being truly alive. Silence and attention, says the author Matthew B. Crawford are resources to be guarded and preserved in the midst of the unrelenting and often uninvited stimulus of our times.

"There are some resources that we hold in common, such as the air we breathe and the water we drink. We take them for granted, but their widespread availability makes everything else we do possible... Just as clean air makes respiration possible, silence, in this broader sense, is what makes it possible to think... If clean air and water were no longer the rule for us, the economic toll would be truly massive... We recognize their importance and fragility. With regard to the resource of attention... we do not yet (fully) understand it to be a resource. "

- Matthew B. Crawford, *The World Beyond Your Head*

And so attention without distraction is a valuable resource, says Crawford, a resource that makes it possible to think. Going deeper, this undistracted attention is also what makes it possible to feel. Our experience in life has more to do with feeling sensations in the body and contact with our emotions than we might expect. Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes is reported to have said that "At the constitutional level where we work, ninety percent of any decision is emotional. The rational part of us supplies the reasons for supporting our predilections."

There are feelings we like and feelings we don't. We prefer comfort to discomfort and pain. We like feelings like love, connection, warmth and joy. We do our best to avoid feelings like loneliness, boredom and anxiety. Our massive pharmaceutical dispensaries promise that we can be healthy, happy and productive by staying in this preferred comfort zone. And yet we know that this is not true. In the short term, maybe, but looking at the trajectory of modern culture, we see rates of suicide, chronic illness, dissatisfaction, conflict, anxiety, depression and the breakdown of personal relationship continuing to increase.

What is the alternative? When I contemplate what has been most useful in my work during the past thirty years - and in my own life as well - it is the ability to create a space in which whatever shows up can be experienced, expressed and re-aligned. My preferred methods include Cranio-Sacral therapy, Neuro-Emotional technique and the Chiropractic adjustment, but the core of it all has to do with presence and a safe space in which to feel and experience what truly exists. Then a correction can be made. An archer hones his skills by seeing time and again what causes him to miss the mark.

Presence is a place in consciousness and time where we are welcoming of all that exists, heeding the sensations of the body, attentive to its wisdom, welcoming the senate of voices that contain all of our feelings, in touch with the energies, tensions, breath and movement of the body. Here we can assist the whole cacophony to find its way in an amazing and spectacular movement towards our birthright and capacity for health and connection.

The innate intelligence of the body knows where to take us and has no language for limitation, only for possibility and the unvarnished experience of life. "Even a blind man can tell when he's walkin' in the sun," sings Chaka Kahn. Try it sometime. Close your eyes and feel what sensations arise in your body. What feelings are present? And without an intent to change anything, see what happens. Are there hidden parts of yourself that have the capacity to participate and add to the greater good? Are you willing to invite them in?

"The outer developments of humanity, which are now stupendous," says Jack Kornfield, "have to be matched by the inner development of the heart." I have found time and again, in my own life and in the lives of the people who seek my assistance, that presence and the unhurried development of the heart leads to better health, contentment and connection. It may be the essential ingredient in bringing reason, tolerance and understanding to these tumultuous times we live in.

- Dr. Bruce

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