

P.O.I.N.T. (Pause, Open, Inquire, Non-identify, Truth)



This latest acronym gets to the essence of Thich Nhat Hanh's mindfulness teachings.

▪ **Pause** – This is what we first are doing in a mindfulness practice, we're simply pausing to step into that space between stimulus and response. This doesn't mean we need to stop moving (although that can be helpful at times), but we're pausing the auto-pilot.

▪ **Open** – After pausing we're opening to what's here in the moment. Maybe it's a person in front of us that we've been neglecting to listen to, or maybe we've been on a hike busy in thought and we're opening to the nature around us, or maybe we're feeling stress, anxious, sad, or some other uncomfortable

feeling and we're opening to the reality that, that is what's there.

▪ **Inquire/Investigate** – Here is where we go beyond just opening to what's here, but now begin getting curious about it. We put on our beginner's mind cap and inquiring into the experience. We can get curious about the emotion and the physical expression of it. How big is it? What is the shape? Does it have a color? As we do this and just allow it to be we might also notice if it stays the same or shifts around. We can investigate deeper by asking it what it's believing. If it's a negative emotion does it believe that "I'm not good enough," or "Something is fundamentally wrong with me," or maybe "I'll never be able to get better at XYZ." This could be any number of negative beliefs. We can even inquire into the thoughts themselves now with these four questions in *Uncovering Happiness* that I adapted from Byron Katie's four questions.

▪ **Non-identify/Natural Awareness** – As we begin to Pause, Open and Investigate we get space from the experience itself. We're practicing settling deeper into a sense of awareness viewing the experience. The awareness is not wrapped up in the experience, the sensations, emotions and thoughts are arising within a wider awareness. There's a sense of freedom in this, we're not so identified with it anymore, it's our natural awareness.

▪ **Truth** – As we settle into this natural awareness we come to recognize the truth that fundamentally this is our refuge and is who we are beneath the ever-changing flux of daily experiences. We start to see that everyone has this same natural awareness beneath the masks they wear. Most importantly, we start to sense to truth that we are all connected in this way. Or as Thich Nhat Hanh says, "we inter-are." This is a truth of humanity.

THOUGHTS are NOT FACTS PRACTICE *mindful*

When you put some space between you and your reaction, it changes your relationship to your thoughts—you can watch them come and go instead of treating them as matter of fact. If you're stuck on a negative thought, ask yourself:

- 1 Is it true?**
Often the answer is, "No, you." This is the brain initially reacting—the autopilot you live with and believe is you.
- 2 Is it absolutely true?**
Is this thought 100% accurate? Can you see the thought in a different way?
- 3 How does this thought make me feel?**
Notice any storylines you're holding onto, and name your feelings: sad, angry, jealous, hurt.
- 4 What would things be like if I didn't hold this belief?**
Imagine possible benefits to your relationships, energy levels, and motivation.

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