

What Have You Gained

..... source unknown (adapted and modified by Amy Fox)

Someone once asked the Buddha, "What have you gained from meditation– all of the hours spent underneath the Bodhi tree just observing your breath in stillness and silence? What have you gained?"

The Buddha was silent for quite some time and then replied, "I cannot tell you what I've gained, but I can tell you what I've lost.

I've lost all addictions and cravings.

I've lost all fear and stressful thoughts.

I've lost all illusions and stories that I tell myself.

If you sit in the space of mediation long enough, just observing the breath, all of your stressful thoughts and fear will lose their power over you."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

OPENING CLASS

Take a moment to arrive on your mat, as you are, where you are.

Allow yourself to notice your natural breath. Observe if your breath feels full and easy or short and held.

With deliberate effort and attention, start to bring some strength and intensity to your breath, deepening your breath here...

DURING CLASS

In quantum theory there is a scientific principle known as the Observer Effect. The Observer Effect says that the act of observing can influence what's being observed.

Notice your breath in this moment.

Just the act of shifting your awareness to the breath, changes the nature of the breath. By observing the breath, we change and affect the breath.

Attention is like a flashlight. Where we shine it, is where the light goes. And, if we can shift the awareness to the breath, we can use the breath to calm the fluctuations of the mind.

CLOSING CLASS

Meditation isn't so much a still place of sitting as much as it is cultivating a still place in our minds. When we come back to the breath, we can use the breath to calm the mind, freeing ourselves of cravings, stress and illusions.

EXTRAS

Yoga Sutra 1.2 says, "Yoga Chitta Vritti Nirodah," which means "Yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind."

This sutra reminds us that fluctuations are part of life. Our mind is always swirling with thoughts—remnants of the past or projections of the future—thoughts of positive things, thoughts of negative things.

The goal of yoga is not to rid ourselves of thoughts but to calm the fluctuations of the mind, to be able to notice the thoughts without being sucked into a thought spiral.