

The Power of Concentration

..... retelling of a Hindu story (adapted and modified by Amy Fox)

Thousands of years ago, in a kingdom in India, there was a place where all the children of the royal families went to school, where they were taught various subjects, including warfare. One of their lessons was on archery and during one particular archery lesson, the teacher, Drona, had put up a fake, wooden bird on a tree as a target to test his students' abilities. Their task was to hit the eye of the bird.

He first called upon his oldest and smartest student, Yudhi. Taking position by his teacher, he crouched slightly and drew his bowstring taut.

"Can you see the bird properly? Tell me everything you can see, Yudhi," said the teacher.

Wanting to be thorough, Yudhi began to list off everything that met his eyes. "I see the wooden bird, the branch, and the tree. I can see the leaves moving and even more birds sitting on the same tree. I can see the stream, the grass, other trees, the sky..."

When he finished, he waited for his master's command to shoot, but instead his teacher said, "Put down your bow and take a seat Yudhi, you will not hit the eye of the bird."

The next boy was called forward and asked the same question by the teacher. He gave a similar answer, naming everything he could see. Once again, the the boy was told to put away his bow. This same pattern continued with every boy that followed, until finally Drona reached Arjuna.

"Tell me what you can see, Arjuna," repeated Drona.

"I can see only the eye of the bird," replied Arjuna without breaking eye contact with his target.

"Can you not see the trees and the sky? Or perhaps the branch the bird is sitting on?" his mentor asked.

"No sir, all I can see is the eye and nothing else," he said, holding his bow steady and maintaining his unwavering gaze.

Drona was pleased with this response. He cast a glance at the crowd of boys, who were held in silence but slowly began nodding as the lesson began to become clear to them.

Drona gave the command to shoot and with a loud twang, the arrow sprang from his bow straight into the bird's eye. A perfect shot.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

OPENING CLASS

Energy is the currency of life and where you expend that energy— your focus— is what determines your reality.

Notice where your focus is in this moment....

Begin to draw your attention to the breath and see if you can begin to deepen your breath here...

DURING CLASS

Where can you starve your distractions and feed your focus?

On average, we check our phones every 12 minutes. We experience interruptions roughly every eight minutes and each interruption takes about five minutes. Not to mention it takes 15 minutes to resume the activity we were just doing before we were interrupted.

Where is your attention in this moment and where can you come back to your breath?

CLOSING CLASS

With attention to attention, we return to our breath and find awareness and that is where our power lies.

May you remember you are powerful beyond measure, stronger than you think, braver than you seem and blessed with everything you need.

EXTRAS

We struggle with Continual Partial Attention, or the inability to fully give our attention to any one thing. We're constantly on, living in a state of alertness and in the short term, we adapt to these demands, but long term, the stress makes us hyper-vigilant, provoking an addiction to being distracted and looking for something.

The Five More Rule is a simple way to learning to concentrate better. It says when you feel like quitting, you just do five more. Five more minutes. Five more exercises. Five more pages. And all this extends our focus. This rule pushes us beyond the point of frustration and it helps build mental concentration