Not Knowing

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As mindfulness becomes established and there is more continuity moment to moment—each moment aware of what's here, aware of what's arising—we do at times become aware of a profound truth: while we can know what's here in this moment, we have no idea what the next moment will be. We can be available to receive each moment and know each moment.

This awareness of not knowing is, in a way, more of an understanding than an actual experience, because in each moment, each experience is known. The experience is known. Sometimes it's not so obvious what the object is, but there can be just this aware knowing that we're aware, even when we're not so clear about the object.

And yet the recognition or understanding that we have no idea what the next moment will bring—this is an understanding more than a direct experience. It can come in obvious ways, such as recognizing that we have no idea when our very last breath will be, our own mortality. We don't know when our life will end. And it can come in more subtle ways, in the recognition of just this very next arising.

When we are really present, there can be almost a continual surprise, partly through touching into actual arisings rather than our ideas, concepts, and beliefs about what's happening. This truth that we don't know the next thing that will happen can be obscured by our beliefs, our agendas, our delusions, our taking things to be permanent that are impermanent. And yet, when those beliefs, views, and ideas are seen as arisings, they too can simply be known as another surprising phenomenon.

We don't know what will happen in the very next moment. The sense that we think we do know is a concept, a conceiving. The Buddha pointed to this truth around conceiving. We conceive things we think we know. And he said, "In whatever way they conceive, the fact is ever other than that." We do not know. In fact, it's the nature of insight that we can't know what we think we're looking for.

And yet many of us tend to be drawn to the familiar, to knowing that we know. In a way, we can orient toward that, searching for the familiar. Yet this very act of looking can obscure something that has never been seen before. Can we simply be available and receptive, willing to not know?

Sometimes this recognition, this understanding around not knowing, can lead us to feel confused or fearful. There may be a relationship to that understanding—a relationship of fear or confusion or unsettledness, insecurity, vulnerability. It's really important to recognize that relationship. At certain points in the practice, there can be senses of confusion or fear or vulnerability about this deep truth.

It does require trust—such a deep trust to let go. And yet we can't just pick up that trust. Often our practice

is noticing what's in the way of that trust. That feeling of vulnerability has an arising in this moment.

Are you aware? Are you already aware?

Trust the awareness.

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