

Creating Space (1)

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 3 min read

We live in a society that puts a price on time. It was not always so. But that's how it is at the moment and we have to not simply live with it, but live wisely with it. The growing demands of efficiency and productivity strain the last ounce of energy each moment has. And that energy is ours. In fact it's our life-energy. Our work can demand the better part of our energy resources at the expense of personal welfare, our family and our social life. If this rings true for you to any extent then you will need to see how you can conserve energy. Try creating space, temporal space. Here is one of my favourite quotes. It comes from Ajahn Thate, acknowledged of high attainments, whom I met in Thailand. He summed up the spiritual life: Take it easy. Make it simple. Stay with the one who knows. Do one job at a time. It's not that we can do two jobs at the same time. It's just that we try to. Have you ever found yourself having a conversation with someone and filling in a form and/or writing up a piece of work and/or working on the computer? You can sometimes get away with it with an automatic manual task, but it's still taxing the brain. Even if we are expert multi-taskers, it's still necessary to actually fully attend to what is being done. Failing to do this is one reason mistakes are made and accidents happen. So we need to do one task at a time. That means paying attention to what we are actually doing. The effect is to increase our focus and span of attention. That is, our concentration is enhanced. Create a pause between every task. How do you react when the phone rings? Do you launch yourself at the phone? Have you noticed how mobile calls trump everything else? This sort of compulsive behaviour simply increases our agitation. And agitation is wasted energy. When you come to the end of a task. STOP. Reflect on what you have done. Acknowledge it. And 'put it aside'. Take a breath and relax. Let this be as long as it takes to feel inwardly calm. Most often it's less than a minute. And then intend the next task and remind ourselves of our Dhamma intention (see below). Take the phone call for instance. Surely most people will wait for three to five rings. At the first ring, just acknowledge where you are with your work. At the second, stop and breathe, at the third calmly pick up the phone. Should the caller ring off, call the person back. If we can begin each task with a mind uncluttered, with clarity, our efficiency is increased. That should make the powers that be happy! Take a silent break. Tea breaks and lunch breaks are times to really establish that quiet, equanimity and still mindfulness that the morning meditation put us in touch with. Again, it doesn't have to be long. Five minutes may be enough before we join others. It's also so refreshing to get away from the work place for a while. To sit in the local park, or just quietly walk the streets, or as I used to, sit in the local church. Go with the flow. I once received a card with a fish floating in a river. It said only dead fish go with the flow! But we won't be dead so long as we are aware. We're as if dead if we lose our sense of present mindfulness. If the river happens to be in torrent or in flood, then we will surely be lost if we don't exercise some still awareness. Going with the flow means to be able to let go of what we are doing when something needs to

be attended to. That phone call again, that colleague approaching, at home the child calling for attention, can all seem unwelcome interruptions, in which case they become irritations. And any form of anger is wasted energy. A Dhamma intention. This could be anything. For instance before I answer the phone I might remind myself to speak kindly, openly and appropriately. So there we have. Three simple tips that help us work better, feel better and conserve our life energy. Easy weasy peasy?

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