

## **The Encouragement of Light** by Russell Delman August 2010

*The Rose by Hafiz*

*How did the Rose  
Ever Open its Heart  
And Give to This World  
All its Beauty?*

*It felt the Encouragement of Light  
Against its Being-  
Otherwise  
We all remain  
Too frightened... ..*

Thank you, Hafiz, for this “encouragement of light”..... we know, in deep inner places just what that feels like.

### **The Light of Awareness**

**Turning the light around** is that important inner move of shining warm-hearted attention on what’s alive in our inner life. Rather than looking outward, we allow awareness to orient in an inward direction. This light of awareness is the sun for our blossoming, encouragement for our soul. As this impulse deepens, our caring toward other people and situations around us naturally emerges. Let’s look together at what this might mean.

Often meditation students ask me “what do I do with all these negative, even hostile, thoughts that keep coming up?” The short answer I give is “love them”. After a confused and maybe startled look, I hear two genuine questions: “what do you mean and how can I do that”?

By ‘love them’, I do not mean to like them or approve of them or agree with them. Love simply means extending the non-judgmental, warm, clear light of awareness upon them. This awareness does not live in your head- if it is anywhere- it is in your heart.

Although awareness can arise spontaneously, there are a few steps that can encourage this light to shine.

### **Step 1- Radical Pause**

Stepping back from our ordinary internal dialogue- the chatter and unexamined “stories” with all of their judgments/reactions/opinions- is the first step. This is **the radical pause** in which we connect to our present moment, bodily experience. While any sensation can be helpful, I suggest orienting around three dominant experiences (perhaps pause with each suggestion and take a few moments for experiencing right now).

Start with the **ground** sensations of weight, of substantiality and contact with your support surface. In standing this is your feet on the floor, in sitting perhaps your bottom on a chair, in lying a bed, etc. At every moment of your life you are in relation to this gravitational pull- the unconditional generous support of the earth. Being conscious of this support has the surprisingly powerful effect of “grounding” you. Grounding is the antidote for the top heavy, disconnected feelings that often arise when lost in our stories.

Add to this sense of grounded-ness, the **sounds** that surround you. Do not pick and choose, be like a tape recorder taking in all the sounds- the bird chirping and the refrigerator humming are equally welcome. Embodied experience is not just “in” the physical body but also, always, in a wider space.

Finally, at every moment of living you are in some part of a **breathing** cycle. Either you are inhaling, exhaling or pausing- tuning into this ever present, vital exchange is life giving.

Through the radical pause we connect intimately with the moment just as it is. Our physical body is a door way to “presencing”.

## **Step 2- Acknowledging**

Now that you are present in the moment, attention can turn toward the “felt-sense” of how it feels to be alive. A felt-sense is usually more than just one feeling, it is the way the entire situation, including the thoughts, concerns, sensations, hopes, images, emotions are experienced all together. Our intention is to say “hello” to the inner state. If it is contracted, stuck or painful, the key is to acknowledge it without trying to fix or change it. Imagine bringing your warm heartedness to a state that is usually met with judgment and aggression. Also, acknowledge the part of you that wishes the stuck place would go away and wants to change it. **You are the welcoming ‘space’ in which all the inner voices can be accepted.**

Shining the light reveals what is living, what is true in our hearts, bodies and minds in a given moment. Sitting here, writing, I notice a mild background discomfort in my belly. What is that..... a kind of tightness something unsettled, perhaps something about the seminar I am teaching. Pausing in the typing, I take a few moments to acknowledge the presence of this tight place, letting “it” know that I know its there- like giving a child or a pet a gentle moment of care. Just that acknowledgment creates a subtle releasing, a sense of “being on the same page” with my inner life. Amazingly, this happens without working on it or trying to change it- such is the power of acknowledging.

### Step 3- Being With

Learning to ‘**be with**’ an inner state is remarkably empowering. I call this quality “presencing” and it is more healing than any direct problem solving that I know. Keeping company with the inner state as if it is a dear friend or a child in pain can be very helpful. Even addressing it (“it” being that inner place that is carrying this painful feeling), affectionately with something like “dear one, tell me what so difficult” and listening to the response often creates a surprising inner movement. Resting a hand on the place that is carrying the hurt also can be healing. Always, always, you are listening to the response of the inner/feeling body.

As I am with the remnants of that tightness in my belly, images of the one student that I am concerned about come to mind. Asking my inner body if the tightness is connected to my concern that the seminar is too demanding for her I receive an inner “yes”- a bodily confirmation that the contraction is connected to this situation. Even without a solution, my body let’s go further, just knowing that I am listening. I can now spend some time inviting solutions to the situation- interestingly the majority of the relief comes before a solution is found!

### Step 4- Inquiry

After encouraging the inner place with the warm light of awareness, you can enter the final step called **inquiry**. Here, grounded in our bodies, keeping non-judgmental contact with our inner life, we begin to gently ask: what is the most important thought/belief that is living in me right now. My experience is that there is always an unexamined “untruth” that is at work, often unconsciously, under the surface. By untruth I mean **unverifiable, exaggerated** assertions like: “no one will ever love me or I am always so stupid or people think I am ugly”. Holding our attention in our present moment experiencing and turning our light toward the untruth will usually result in a deep bodily release. Note this does not mean analyzing the thought or trying to get rid of it. Rather, with the light of awareness we keep returning with non-

judgmental curiosity to the dark place of the 'untruth'. The unexamined untruth cannot survive for long in this light.

For my situation in this seminar, though most of the contraction is already free, a small part remains. As I maintain contact with embodied presence and the subtle tightness which has moved to my chest, I inquire into any thoughts that are living in the background. Sure enough I discover a small voice saying something like, "it is my job that everyone get value from and enjoy the seminar". While I love people to get value and joy from my teaching clearly this is not my job. I am here to do the best I can at presenting this material. With that awareness my body gets totally light and free.

This "turning toward" has the feeling of acknowledging what is true in the moment without either fighting, ignoring or resigning oneself to it. Imagine an infant waking you up in the middle of the night with loud cries, a snotty face and a full, smelly diaper. While you prefer life to be different, your natural choice is to put your reactions in the background and take care of the baby. Can you imagine a similar response to your own thoughts and feelings?

The encouragement of light is the sun-like energy of awareness that allows our inherent wisdom to come forward. I am struck by the observation that every time a person reconnects with what is alive in their bodies, hearts and minds- even when the moment has many challenges- there is an opening, a letting go in the body. Feeling connected with Self always feels more spacious, lighter, looser and more true. This is really worth noting.

Connecting to the Truth that is deeper than our opinions and preferences, feels these ways because spaciousness, lightness and inner freedom are expressions of our True nature. The tight, pressured, dark places are departures from our deepest connection to Life and, when approached through 'presencing' they become invitations to return 'home'.

The encouragement of Light- the remembering to meet the moment with the warm heart of a parent caring for a child- is a great gift for our continued unfolding. Even if it feels a bit silly, try saying to a hurting inner place "oh dear one I am with you" and placing a hand wherever you can sense its presence. Try it and see what happens.

Wising you well your journey... ..Russell

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