

Embodied Meditation: Intimacy with Living
Russell Delman August 2013

What does it mean to be intimate with your life?

How do we become distant from ourselves and the world?

What does it mean to be intimate with living? If it is true, as I believe it is, that our way of attending to life determines the quality of our experience of life, then mastering our attention becomes critical. How can we attend to our living so that we experience the deeply satisfying connectedness of intimacy?

The first dictionary definition for intimacy is close relationship. For me this is an important part of true intimacy yet not the whole thing. To be closely related implies two- something related to something else. This deep connectedness is an exquisitely important capacity for human beings. Why do I say that this understanding incomplete?

What about moments when there is no gap between the experiencer and the experience? It seems that this kind of oneness with a moment must also be included to get at least two of the ways intimacy can be experienced. Here there is a melting of boundaries that feels distinct from "close relationship". As Rumi says: "if there is no wall there is no need for fitting the window or the latch".

There is a third intimacy. We can call this "not two, not one". This is very challenging to describe meaningfully in language. When the light is on, "self-illuminated from the inside" there is an effortless "presencing" of the living moment. Sometimes this leans toward twoness, sometimes toward a oneness.

For me this third instancing is the ground for the other two. This is the realm of Embodied Meditation. It is so ordinary that we miss it: you being you without effort. You are neither lost in habitual living nor striving to be aware. You are awake to the living moment in the natural way you were as a child yet with the added quality of "self-knowing". This is self-reflective awareness that is at the same time spontaneous and flowing yet also can have intentionality.

In The Embodied Life School, we practice a deep, simple form of meditation called Shikantaza or "just sitting". Although based in Zen, the teaching has been strongly influenced from many years of integrating: Feldenkrais® movement, interactive awareness practices, brain research and various forms of deep listening.

As humanity gets more and more disconnected from self, environment and each other, cultivating intimacy in all these ways seems essential for our individual and collective blossoming. We are in a very significant evolutionary moment. Please join me in uncovering our implicit interconnectivity through becoming intimate with living.